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THE GREAT AWAKENING IN CONNECTICUT

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PREFACE

As the ardor of the Great Awakening in New England seemed to be cooling, an effort was made to record what had happened during those tumultuous years. Thomas Prince, Jr., of Boston published a weekly magazine entitled The Christian History, in which he sought to bring together accounts of revivals in various places. Volume I ran from March, 1743, to February, 1744, and Volume II from March, 1744, to February, 1745. While the editor tried to be fair and accurate (reports were often attested to by several co-signers), he did not in any sense provide a connected history of the movement.

Centennial celebrations of the coming of the Great Awakening in 1740 suggested to Joseph Tracy the preparation of the first real history of the revival. His The Great Awakening came off the press in 1842. Since Tracy's volume was designed to promote a similar quickening in his time and since it was a general treatment, it was inevitable that others would eventually produce works that would present more in detail the events of the Awakening in restricted geographical areas and that would take greater note of non-religious factors of the Awakening. It was not until about three fourths of a century later, however, that the first of these regional studies appeared. Charles H. Maxson published his The Great Awakening in the Middle Colonies in 1920. Wesley M. Gewehr's, The Great Awakening in Virginia, 1740-1790, appeared ten years later. Almost another quarter of a century elapsed before L. G. Lavengood wrote his dissertation (yet unpublished) on "The Great Awakening and New England Society" (Chicago, 1953). Four years later Edwin S. Gaustad published his Yale dissertation under the title The

Great Awakening in New England. Presumably New England was last to receive new attention because Tracy had emphasized that area. Recognizing that none of these works had dealt in any detail with the extensive separatist movement spawned by the Great Awakening, C. C. Goen sought to fill that gap with his Revivalism and Separatism in New England, 1740-1800 (1962).

In all of these works inadequate attention was given to the colony of Connecticut, where the revival had been more intense than in most other areas and where the movement led to more violent contention than anywhere else. Numerous questions about the Awakening in Connecticut remained unanswered. How great was the movement in Connecticut; did it cover the entire colony? Or was it confined to the eastern part? How extensive was the reputedly great increase in the strength of the Baptist and Anglican churches during the middle and latter part of the eighteenth century and how definitely was that growth related to the Awakening? Was there a relationship between social status and religious groupings; was it mostly lower class individuals who were influenced by the Awakening? Were the Congregational separatists almost entirely from the lowest classes of society as some commentators claimed? What effects did the Awakening have on the Connecticut church, its theology and religious establishment? How many people were really affected by the revival and came into the church? Did the revival improve moral and social conditions in the colony as is commonly claimed? These and many lesser questions led to the present study, and all of these questions have been investigated and at least partially answered. The present study has involved

all known church records of Connecticut, as well as all known town, county and church histories or church commemorative celebrations relating to the eighteenth century. Only the most pertinent of these appear in the bibliography, however.

The writer is particularly indebted to Professor Clarence L. Ver Steeg for directing his interest to this investigation and for perceptive criticism in the stages of its preparation. He is further indebted to the library staffs of Northwestern University, Yale University, The Newberry Library, the Connecticut Historical Society, and especially to the Connecticut State Library for permission to use dozens of original manuscripts in their archives of state and church records.

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PART I

CONNECTICUT DURING THE GREAT AWAKENING

CHAPTER I

LAND OF STEADY HABITS

A. Beautiful for Pilgrim Feet: Geographical Features

From his perch atop Greenfield Hill Timothy Dwight, grandson of Jonathan Edwards, eulogized his beloved Connecticut. Though heavily influenced by English georgic verse, the poem Greenfield Hill freshly expresses the praise of a Calvinist minister with an agrarian orientation for middle-class evangelical virtues and the land for which he held such great affection. Writing in 1794, Dwight could still address himself to a state that had not entered the industrial revolution and which was in many respects similar to what it had been during the Great Awakening:

> The spring-bird carols o'er the cressy rill:
> The shower, that patterns in the ruffled stream,
> The ploughboy's voice, that chides the lingering team,
> The bee, industrious, with his busy song,
> The woodman's axe, the distant groves among,
> The waggon, rattling down the rugged steep,
> The light wind, lulling every care to sleep,
> All these, with mingled music, from below,
> Deceive intruding sorrow, as I go.

The son of a Puritan heritage was careful to add:

> There too, divine Religion is a guest,
> And all the Virtues join the daily feast.[1]

[1] Timothy Dwight, Greenfield Hill, Part II.

This land of which Dwight sang consists of generally undulating upland, rising from a coastal lowland to about 1,000 feet above sea level at the Massachusetts border. In the western part of the colony, where ridges extend south from the Green and Housatonic ranges of Vermont and Massachusetts, a few points rise to over 2,000 feet above the sea. The highest point is Bear Mountain, 2,355 feet. The upland is divided near the middle by the Connecticut River valley, the finest agricultural region of large extent in New England. From Hartford southward the Connecticut River is a tidal and navigable stream with a twelve foot channel at low tide. The Housatonic River in western Connecticut, like the Connecticut River, cuts across the entire length of the colony; but its valley is narrow and its channel navigable only near the coast. The principal river in the east is the Thames, an outlet for three smaller rivers, navigable as far north as Norwich, trading center for Eastern Connecticut. Connecticut is subject to less extreme cold and heat than the rest of New England and is well watered, enjoying an annual rainfall of forty-five to fifty inches.

Though the boundaries of Connecticut were fairly well established when Dwight wrote at the end of the eighteenth century, there was still debate over them when Whitefield evangelized there in 1740.[2] As the result of a blunder in the Connecticut charter, corrected in the Rhode Island charter, Connecticut for some decades claimed all the Narragansett country. For a long time establishment of the eastern boundary seemed hopeless. Finally

[2] Particularly useful in a study of Connecticut's boundary disputes are Clarence W. Bowen, The Boundary Disputes of Connecticut (Boston: James R. Osgood and Co., 1882); and Roland M. Hooker, Boundaries of Connecticut (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1933).

a joint commission was appointed by the two colonies in 1703 and given full powers to settle the dispute. They reached an agreement substantially in accord with the Rhode Island claim and decided to run the line along the middle channel of the Pawcatuck River from salt water to the branch called Ashaway and thence in a straight line north to the Massachusetts border. Contentions followed until 1727 when the Privy Council recommended that the agreement of 1703 should stand. The line was run in 1728 but not confirmed by both sides until 1742.[3]

An agreement had been made between the Dutch and Connecticut in 1650 to settle the western boundary of the English colony, but unfortunately it was not ratified by either home government. When the English took over New Amsterdam in 1664, the charter granted to the Duke of York gave him lands all the way to the Connecticut River and a new charter of 1674 confirmed the Connecticut as the eastern boundary of New York. Naturally Connecticut fought this usurpation of lands already granted her. An agreement of sorts was reached in 1683 when the two colonies decided to run the line twenty miles east of the Hudson. But a rectangle of land near the Sound which had been settled by Connecticut (61,440 acres) was granted to that colony. In compensation an oblong about a mile wide was surrendered by Connecticut all along her western border north of the rectangle. Thus, the border was to begin at the mouth of the Byram River and run upstream to the wading place, then northwest eight miles, eastward twelve miles in a line parallel to the Sound and then about twenty-one miles east of and parallel to the Hudson River to the Massachusetts boundary. This decision did not end the matter,

[3] Bowen, Boundary Disputes, p. 48; George L. Clark, A History of Connecticut (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1914), p. 177.

however; and disputes over the boundary line continued until 1731, when the line of 1683 was ratified.[4]

The conflict over the Connecticut-Massachusetts border arose because of an error made in the official survey by Solomon Saffery and Nathaniel Woodward in 1642. The error put the line south of Woodstock, Suffield and Enfield instead of just north of them. Connecticut discovered the error at an early date and objected, but to no avail. The dispute dragged on throughout the seventeenth century. In 1695 Connecticut made her own survey, which of course granted her the towns in question, and began to settle upon lands in Enfield and Suffield. Claims and counter-claims passed between the two colonies until 1713 when it was agreed that Massachusetts was to have jurisdiction over the disputed border towns and in return was to compensate Connecticut with an equal amount of land in western Massachusetts. This was sold and the money given to Yale. Unfortunately, however, the border towns had not been consulted; and they kept up a running battle to rejoin Connecticut. The 1713 line had never received royal confirmation, as it should have, since it altered a specific charter provision. In 1749 Connecticut voted to receive Enfield, Suffield, Somers and Woodstock. During the rest of the colonial period Massachusetts continued to protest the action of annexation and to levy taxes on the towns without collecting them; Connecticut continued to govern the towns. The issue never was settled until 1826.[5]

[4] Hooker, pp. 28-38.

[5] Hooker, pp. 15-28; Bowen, pp. 58-66.

In an assessment of the Great Awakening in Connecticut, it is important to discover how many people were living in the colony if one is to ascertain the proportionate impact of the revival. Exact population figures for the American colonies before 1790 are hard to arrive at because precise census figures are commonly lacking. Fortunately a census was taken in 1756 in Connecticut, providing at least one firm total with which to work. It reported results as follows:

Hartford County	35,714 whites; 854 blacks
New Haven County	17,955 whites; 226 blacks
New London County	22,015 whites; 829 blacks
Fairfield County	19,849 whites; 711 blacks
Windham County	19,669 whites; 345 blacks
Litchfield County	11,773 whites; 54 blacks
Total	126,975 whites; 3,019 blacks[6]

Certainly this number is too large for Connecticut at the height of the Awakening. A British government estimate pegged the number of whites in the colony in 1749 at 100,000.[7] William Douglass reported the population at 100,000 in 1742.[8] Dexter alluded to a Connecticut report to British authorities in 1730, giving the population as 38,700 but believes that that was probably only about two thirds of the actual figure, which

[6] Charles J. Hoadly (ed.), The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut (Hartford: Case, Lockwood and Brainard, 1870), X, 618.

[7] Franklin B. Dexter, "Estimates of Population in the American Colonies," Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, 2d Ser., IV (1887-88), 32.

[8] Evarts B. Greene and Virginia D. Harrington, American Population before the Federal Census of 1790 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932), p. 49.

was underestimated in order to minimize resources.[9] If Dexter is right, the population of Connecticut in 1730 was about 57,000, not much in excess of Osborn's estimate of 55,000. The Connecticut population figures Osborn submits for the first six decades of the eighteenth century are as follows: 1700--24,000; 1710--31,000; 1720--40,000; 1730--55,000; 1740--70,000; 1750--100,000; 1760--142,000.[10] Presumably his estimate is a little low for the date 1740. It may not be far wrong to conclude that Connecticut's population was somewhere around eighty to ninety thousand in 1740.

The population of Connecticut was certainly growing rapidly. If Osborn is right, up to the Revolution it increased on the average about one third during each succeeding decade of the eighteenth century.[11] Between 1700 and 1745 thirty new towns were incorporated.[12] The temporary alleviation of the French pressure following the cessation of hostilities in 1713 brought with it a "restless shifting of population from old, well-settled areas along the Sound and in the Connecticut valley to the unoccupied lands in the northwest and northeast. . ."[13] Increasing population brought increasing numbers of families (whose morals and religion the Church tried to supervise), disputes over rights in the common lands, feuds between sections of a town and the parishes of the various parts, struggles over

[9] Dexter, p. 32.

[10] Norris G. Osborn, History of Connecticut (New York: The States History Company, 1925), II, 323.

[11] Osborn, II, 323.

[12] Clark, History of Connecticut, p. 197.

[13] Albert L. Olson, Agricultural Economy and the Population in Eighteenth-Century Connecticut (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1935), p. 10.

location of the meeting house and other issues that spelled conflict and factionalism in society. Not only did rapid population growth bring about a certain loosening of ministerial or church control over society, but "Population movement /to the northwest and northeast/ was accompanied by a change in the colony's land policy as the old religious-social emphasis gave place to the profit motive, a commercial spirit, and land speculation."[14] All of this ferment created an alarm among the clergy which brought on some of the eighteenth century preaching emphasizing obedience and subordination and warning against overweening worldly interests, as well as the jeremiads which lamented the decline of godliness.

B. The Holy Calling: Economic Affairs

For the Puritan, each man's occupation was a holy calling in which he was to serve God. This was true whether he was a minister, a farmer, or a merchant. In the first half of the eighteenth century a Connecticut man was commonly a farmer. Although Connecticut land, at least in the valley, was considerably better than much New England soil, it was adaptable only to the small subsistence farming of New England. An early complaint of the land as "mountainous. . . full of rocks, swamps, hills and vales"[15] indicates the general problems farmers encountered, but does not betray the truth that with hard work a respectable farm could be carved out of Connecticut terrain. The soil and climate, good for grain and pasture, could not be counted on, however, to produce significant

[14] Olson, p. 10.

[15] Hoadly, Public Records, III, 296.

quantities of surplus goods for export. Nor were there large landed estates such as one might find in New York or Virginia. No agricultural basis for an aristocracy existed in the small Puritan colony. Indian corn or maize was the chief staple crop. Jared Eliot, about mid century, raised sixty to seventy bushels to the acre one year and ninety bushels the following year.[16] Wheat was also grown in considerable quantities and rye and barley in lesser amounts. Trumbull says the potato was introduced into Connecticut in 1720.[17]

Early in the eighteenth century interest in mining developed when copper was found at Wallingford and Simsbury; and in 1709 the General Assembly granted the first charter in America to a mining company, which was formed to work the mine at Simsbury.[18] In 1730 iron mines were first opened at Salisbury, where there was an abundance of rich ore with plenty of charcoal available from adjacent forests to smelt it. Mines were also operated in Sharon and Kent. Iron was first forged at Lime Rock, five miles from Salisbury, in 1734. There are references in the records to iron works at Lyme in 1741.[19] The mine at Salisbury was destined to play an important part in the Revolutionary War, when it provided ore for manufacture of cannon, gun barrels and other war matériel.

What trade there was in Connecticut in the early part of the eighteenth

[16] Osborn, History of Connecticut, II, 326.

[17] Benjamin Trumbull, A Complete History of Connecticut (New Haven: Maltby, Goldsmith and Co., 1818), I, 70.

[18] Clark, History of Connecticut, p. 191.

[19] Forrest Morgan, Connecticut as a Colony and as a State (Hartford: The Publishing Society of Connecticut, 1904), I, 506.

century "consisted of little more than the gathering of agricultural surpluses for shipment abroad and the distribution throughout the colony of such English manufactures as were needed by the inhabitants."[20] While that situation was not destined to change much during the century, Connecticut did become more involved in ocean shipping. In 1720 Captain John Jeffrey of Portsmouth, England, settled at Groton Bank and five years later built the largest vessel yet constructed on this side of the Atlantic, a vessel of 700 tons (the Mayflower was about 120 tons), and New London soon had a reputation for large ships. On June 26, 1724, six vessels sailed together from New London, loaded with horses for the West Indies.[21] The only official port of entry in Connecticut in 1740 and the site of the sole British customs house was New London. Generally the ships that sailed from this port were bound for the West Indies. The record of sailings for the year running from March 25, 1748, to March 25, 1749, provides insight into the character of the trade:[22]

Ships	Docked	Sailed
Brigantines	3	20
Sloops	30	37
Schooners	4	5
Totals	47	63

[20] Glenn Weaver, "Some Aspects of Early Eighteenth-Century Connecticut Trade," Connecticut Historical Society Bulletin, XXII (1957), 23.

[21] Clark, History of Connecticut, pp. 188-90.

[22] William Douglass, A Summary, Historical and Political of the First Planting, progressive Improvements and present State of the British Settlements in North America (Boston: D. Fowle, 1753), II, 162.

In addition to New London, the only real port in the colony, there were eight ports for small craft. For example, a limited coastal trade in maize, rye, hides and livestock was conducted by Stratford, Milford and Fairfield on Long Island Sound. Small surpluses of corn, wheat, flax, beef and pork were also sent to Boston and New York. The chief items of export appear to have been clapboards, tar, ship timber and fully-constructed ships. The chief imports from the West Indies were salt, rum, molasses and sugar.

Connecticut, as was true of all the other English colonies, had trouble obtaining a medium of exchange and financing the special drains on the treasury related to eighteenth century wars. Her currency had been firmer than that of other colonies. Even after issuing the first bills of credit in 1709, she wisely maintained the value of her currency and would have gotten along better if Massachusetts and Rhode Island notes had not seeped across the border. Her paper money experiences grew more and more demoralizing between 1714 and 1749; in the latter year she owed 39,000 pounds. One of the big problems with paper money issues was counterfeiting; in 1735 such a large issue of counterfeit bills poured into circulation that the Assembly ordered a whole new currency issue. But of course the biggest problem of all was inflation. The large issues of paper money were not sufficiently backed and steadily decreased in value. In 1740, on the eve of the Great Awakening, Connecticut issued 45,000 pounds in paper money to meet the exigencies of the war with Spain. While all were hurt by the inflation of the first half of the eighteenth century, especially hard hit was the minister. Massachusetts and Connecticut towns commonly upped

salaries of ministers with inflation, but bitter wrangling often occurred in congregations over it and salaries were often in arrears by several years. Schoolmasters suffered almost as much, and frequently financial troubles in the towns made it impossible to hire school teachers. The number of lawsuits over debt collection and the amount in which debts were to be paid (with different issues of money in circulation) became increasingly excessive and provided an unsettling factor in a "land of steady habits."[23]

The product of the rural oriented economic base of Connecticut was a stable and homogeneous society relatively impervious to rapid change. Connecticut did not have the large shipping and financial interests of Massachusetts with a consequent growing social stratification. Nor did she have a concentration of wealth and liquid capital that attracted the notice of the mother country, as did her more powerful neighbor to the north and east. Thus, while her charter was frequently threatened, it was never revoked; and the colony remained virtually an independent commonwealth, free to control its own affairs. And without as many outside contacts, Connecticut proved less susceptible to the liberalizing religious influences making inroads in Boston and Cambridge. The colony took great pride in the orthodoxy of its churches. Though population growth, currency inflation, and other upsetting developments loomed on the horizon of the "land of steady habits," Connecticut was remarkably able to preserve the

[23] Frances M. Caulkins, History of Norwich, Connecticut (Hartford: Friends of the Author, 1874), p. 293; Clark, History of Connecticut, p. 266; the unpublished dissertation (Chicago, 1953) by Lawrence G. Lavengood, "The Great Awakening and New England Society," pp. 129-30.

old order of things until the coming of the Great Awakening with all of its excitement and disturbing effects. Zeichner comments, "Connecticut early acquired the reputation of being a 'land of steady habits.' Perhaps more than any other colony it had attempted to preserve the ways of life and institutions of its first settlers."[24] Osgood seconds this viewpoint:

> No other of the thirteen colonies was so compact and uniform in its structure and development as this. It had no commercial centres of special importance, no landed and trading aristocracy like the colonies to the west and south of it. The gradations of wealth among her population--which was almost purely British--were moderate and the majority of farmers within it was overwhelming. Ecclesiastical unity and conformity to the general type of Puritan culture and life were rigidly maintained.[25]

C. Commonwealth under God: Political Developments

When Connecticut moved into the eighteenth century, it consisted of four counties: Fairfield, New Haven, Hartford and New London. In 1726 Windham was created, largely from New London County; in 1751 Litchfield was for the most part carved out of Hartford County. But the county governments had little real authority during the colonial period, nor have they had since independence. The towns operated as practically independent units; they were empowered to make all "Orders, Rules, and Constitutions" affecting the welfare of their communities, once they were properly established by the General Court of the colony. Within the towns freemen

[24] Oscar Zeichner, Connecticut's Years of Controversy, 1750-1776 (Chapel Hill, N. C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1949), p. 3.

[25] Herbert L. Osgood, The American Colonies in the Eighteenth Century (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1958; orig. pub., 1925), III, 275.

elected the many town officials, deputies to the colonial legislature and in general ran the affairs of the town. To be a freeman and a voter a man had to be twenty-one, possess a freehold estate rated at fifty shillings per annum or forty pounds personal, to be of "Quiet and Peaceable Behaviour, and Civil Conversation," and be accepted at an open meeting of the freemen. Lists of freemen were kept in their home towns or in the office of the secretary of the colony or both.[26] The percentage of freemen in the towns during the first half of the eighteenth century was sometimes about one fourth, sometimes about one half of the adult male population. In 1766 Isaac Stiles put the total number of freemen in the colony at about one ninth of the total population.[27]

Each town could send one or two representatives to the General Assembly. The Assembly was the real political power in the colony. After 1698 the General Assembly or the General Court was separated into two houses, the Assembly and the Council.[28] The General Court held two sessions annually, the first at Hartford, called the Court of Election, beginning on the second Thursday in May; and the second at New Haven, beginning the second Thursday in October. During the spring session the Assembly elected a governor, deputy governor, twelve assistants (to the upper house or Council), a treasurer and secretary. These were chosen from lists of nominees sent in by the towns as a result of primary elections held in the

[26] Douglass, II, 176; Zeichner, pp. 6-7; Osgood, III, 277.

[27] Zeichner, p. 8.

[28] Hoadly, IV, 267.

towns in the fall.[29] The legislature also appointed all judicial officials from the justices of the peace to the members of the Superior Court, so the executive and judicial branches of the government were subordinate to the legislative branch. The General Assembly also made all laws of the colony, disposed of public lands and performed all other duties necessary for the good government of the colony, which enjoyed a greater measure of self-government than any other British colony except Rhode Island.

Annual elections did not lead to frequent turnover in office. Once officials were chosen, they were commonly re-elected until they died, so a small number of prominent families monopolized the elective offices. Between 1689 and 1788 only eleven different men served as governor, thirteen as deputy governor and ninety-seven as members of the twelve-man Council.[30] When Fitz-John Winthrop died in 1707, Gurdon Saltonstall, former minister of the church at New London, was elected to serve until his death in 1724. Joseph Talcott of Hartford rose through the military establishment of Connecticut to hold the governor's chair from 1724 until he died in 1741. Jonathan Law of Milford served the colony from 1741 to 1750, also dying in office. He rose to prominence through his legal profession. As can be surmised from the political structure of the colony, the governors had great prestige but little power.

It might appear that Connecticut had at least some of the outward characteristics of democracy during the colonial period, but appearances

[29] Hoadly, V, 31, 41, 522, 547.

[30] Zeichner, p. 9.

are deceptive. Zeichner observes:

> Democracy, however, never existed, nor was it ever desired by Connecticut's leaders during the colonial period. . . . Connecticut's founding fathers never proposed to build their political institutions upon the principle of equality. Their conception of human nature made that impossible. Man was evil and corrupt. A government of the "Multitude" was, therefore, the worst tyranny. Only the elect were fit to rule. From the very beginning, distinctions based upon property and religion set off those who had political rights from the rest of the population.[31]

It has already been seen that restrictions were placed on who could vote; the freemen could only nominate individuals for the highest offices; legislators elected the top officials, and normally such individuals were re-elected until they died. One should properly speak of Connecticut as a Puritan oligarchy. Osgood put the matter succinctly: "Her town and colony governments constituted a system of little oligarchies or well-organized groups, which worked together with a high degree of harmony for a common and well-understood end. . . . the average freeman was as orthodox as the leaders."[32]

Not only was Connecticut's government not democratic, it was dedicated to the preservation of an ideal by means of a well-organized program. There was as much determination to establish and preserve the Puritan way in early Connecticut as in Massachusetts.

> Connecticut was settled by men who considered true religion more important than any worldly activity. The colony's founding fathers believed that good government could be established only "according to God," and that its chief duty was to "mayntayne and preserve the liberty and purity of the gospell". . . . The ruling hierarchy

[31] Zeichner, p. 6.

[32] Osgood, III, 277.

> officers and ministers scrupulously attempted to preserve that relationship throughout the colonial period.[33]

If the colonial officials, the ministers and the freemen were all dedicated to the end of maintaining the Puritan way, the logical result would be an effort to legislate their convictions into the statutes of the colony. When towns were set up, plots were reserved for the parish church and use of the minister. Schools were established not only to promote good citizenship but also to secure acceptance of a system of Puritan belief and conduct; Yale was founded to prepare men "for public employments in church and civil state"[34] and to instruct students "to know God in Jesus Christ and answerably to lead a Godly sober life."[35] Blue laws were instituted to control public and private morals, and taxes were levied for support of the parish minister. Connecticut even went so far as to set up a colony-wide ecclesiastical polity under the Saybrook Platform.

D. Watchmen on the Wall: The Church and Social Order

But the Saybrook Platform represents the ultimate of concern on the part of Connecticut's leaders to maintain the Puritan way in the colony. Important decisions preceded it, decisions reflecting the determination of both magistrates and clergy to shoulder their mutual responsibility to serve as watchmen on the wall, protecting the people in their charge from incursions that would destroy the faith. In Connecticut's early days churches were organized on the Cambridge Platform, which viewed the

[34] Trumbull, I, 474.

[35] Franklin B. Dexter, Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale College, 1701-1745 (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1885), I, 347.

covenant as the basis of the local church, the local church as autonomous but dependent on other churches for fellowship and counsel, the Bible as the word of God and the final authority in doctrine or polity, and a conversion experience as necessary for church membership. This Platform, adopted by a Synod at Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1648, was supplemented by the Half-Way Covenant by 1662. The latter was an arrangement by which parents who had not professed a conversion experience but lived upright lives could covenant to attend and support the church and could have their children baptized. This concession was agreed to by many of the pastors in order to prevent a large segment of the population from drifting away from the influence and control of the church.

During the seventeenth century as each town was set off by the General Court of Connecticut it was required to provide for a church and a minister. Ecclesiastical societies were organized in each parish for carrying on the business of the society; all church members were members of their respective societies, but all society members did not belong to the church unless they made a profession of a conversion experience. Only members of the church carried on the business of the church, but after 1699 all society inhabitants had a voice in selection of a new minister.[36] Two years earlier a law had been passed providing that salaries due ministers from any town or society should be levied and assessed on the several inhabitants in each town according to their respective estates.[37] To

[36] Hoadly, IV, 316.

[37] Williston Walker, A History of the Congregational Churches in the United States, 3d ed., (New York: The Christian Literature Co., 1898), p. 234.

provide a more specific doctrinal standard, the churches and their ministers were convened and gave their consent to the Westminster and Savoy Confessions and drew up certain rules of ecclesiastical discipline.[38] Then, in part to establish a school for the training of Puritan ministers and others where it would be out of the reach of meddling royal officials in Boston, Yale was founded in Connecticut in 1701.

Basic to Connecticut's church order in the eighteenth century was the Saybrook Platform. At the background of this development was the fact that in 1705 Massachusetts debated the advisability of creating a ministerial association with wide power over all spiritual matters. The proposal failed to gain sufficient support. But in Connecticut the trustees of the new collegiate school at Saybrook, all ministers, urged the General Court to establish a stronger ecclesiastical control of the colony. Governor Saltonstall, a former New London clergyman, received the suggestion enthusiastically; and under the governor's leadership the legislature passed a resolution in May, 1708, calling for a conference of ministerial delegates to assemble at Saybrook in September. Sixteen delegates reported, including eight trustees of the college, four other ministers and four laymen. These represented the forty-one churches of the Congregational order then existing in Connecticut. Besides these only one Baptist and and one Anglican church had been organized. These sixteen delegates constituted themselves the Saybrook Synod and proceeded to adopt regulations which became known as the Saybrook Platform. The Platform was presented

[38] Saybrook's Quadrimillenial: Commemoration of the 250th Anniversary of the Settlement of Saybrook (Hartford: Clark & Smith, 1886), p. 28.

to the meeting of the legislature in October.

The Synod's report consisted of three parts: a Confession of Faith, Heads of Agreement and Articles for Administration of Church Discipline. The Confession acknowledged the Scripture to be the word of God and the only rule of faith and practice and accepted the Articles of the Church of England (excluding their statement about church government), the Longer and Shorter Catechism of Westminster and the Savoy Confession. The Heads of Agreement were those agreed on by the Presbyterians and Congregationalists in England in 1691 for the sake of unity and peace; they provided for a decidedly congregational arrangement. Neither of the first two was particularly new; what was new was that they were made more mandatory than usual for congregational churches. The Articles for Administration of Church Discipline were fifteen in number and provided for one or more consociations of churches in each county to act as responsible tribunals to which churches might refer cases too difficult to be judged by them and to which individuals also might appeal. The ministers of a county were to be organized into associations required to meet at least twice a year. These would have power to examine candidates for the ministry, to call a consociation for dealing with ministers accused of scandal or heresy and to consult with churches in need of a pastor. The Articles also recommended a General Association composed of one or more delegates from each of the county associations to meet once a year. Its duties were not spelled out.[39]

After the Saybrook delegates unanimously agreed to the Platform, they passed it on to the General Assembly which enthusiastically approved it:

[39] Saybrook's Quadrimillenial, pp. 31-37.

> This Assembly do declare their great approbation of such a happy agreement, and do ordain that all the churches within this government that are or shall be thus united in doctrine, worship, and discipline, be, and for the future shall be owned and acknowledged established by law. Provided always, that nothing herein shall be intended and construed to hinder or prevent any society or church that is or shall be allowed by the laws of the government, who soberly differ or dissent from the united churches hereby established, from exercising worship and discipline in their own way, according to their consciences.[40]

In 1709 the Saybrook Platform was approved by the county consociations and the first General Association met at Hartford in May, 1709. The Platform was printed in 1710, the first book printed in Connecticut.[41] A church had been established in Connecticut and Congregationalism had tilted toward Presbyterianism. While Massachusetts guarded the independence of the local church in the Cambridge Platform, Connecticut defended the coordinate feature of Congregationalism--the fellowship and cooperation of the churches.[42] There was some serious opposition to the Saybrook Platform, but churches in general tamely submitted to this constitution. Notable exceptions were the Derby church which remained on the Cambridge Platform, the Woodstock church which on its organization adopted the Cambridge Platform, the Lisbon church in Norwich which in 1723 declared for the Cambridge Platform and the first church in Lyme which in 1731

[40] Hoadly, V, 87.

[41] Saybrook's Quadrimillenial, p. 39.

[42] This difference in polity would result in considerable differences in the progress of the Great Awakening in the two colonies. Much more violent attitudes were manifested by radicals in Connecticut against an establishment which required them by law to support it and which would tolerate no separation.

renounced the Saybrook Platform.[43]

Even though a few churches did not go along with the Saybrook Platform, it did inaugurate a neat little system designed to preserve indefinitely the Puritan way in Connecticut. But unfortunately for the watchmen on the wall, the forces of establishment were to lose ground before forces demanding toleration during following decades of the eighteenth century. Even before the enactment of the Saybrook Platform, in May, 1708, the General Assembly had provided that individuals could qualify themselves according to the Toleration Act in the reign of William and Mary.[44] As already noted, Anglicans and Baptists had each formed one congregation in the colony by 1708. To qualify under the English Toleration Act of 1689, individuals were required to take an oath to the Crown, repudiate the doctrine of transubstantiation, declare their dissent from the Congregational church and organize themselves into congregations separate from the established church and qualify themselves as dissenters before their county court.[45] This only gave them permission to establish their own churches; it did not excuse them from paying taxes for the support of the established Congregational clergy.

Anglicans could put great pressure on the Congregational establishment of Connecticut for increased toleration. They could threaten to appeal to the mother country over lack of freedom to practice the official Anglican faith and bring in jeopardy the very charter rights of the colony.

[43] See the unpublished dissertation (Harvard, 1960) by Richard L. Bushman, "Government and Society in Connecticut, 1690-1760," p. 215.

[44] Hoadly, V, 50.

[45] Zeichner, p. 13.

Reluctantly the General Court in May of 1727 voted that taxes collected by the church of Connecticut from Anglican church members were to be turned over to an established Anglican minister.[46] The Baptists won the same exemption in October of 1729[47] and the Quakers the preceding May.[48] But in October of 1730 the Assembly said that Congregationalists or Presbyterians could not qualify under the toleration act.[49] Increasingly individuals could and did elude the established pastor's authority by joining the dissenters. Parishes of the established church lost the power to control people as framers of the Saybrook Platform had envisioned. A portent of this slipping control appeared in the defection to Anglicanism of the rector and tutor of Yale and two other Congregational ministers in 1722.[50]

But cracks in the walls of the Puritan fortress must not be overemphasized. The Saybrook Platform was able for a time to maintain rather effectively the power of the church in Connecticut. In fact, Connecticut society in general gave the appearance of being rather stable. Zeichner observes:

> Early eighteenth-century Connecticut could have rightfully claimed that it was a "land of steady habits." Its homogeneous population was in almost perfect agreement on major policies and ends. All but a small minority belonged to the Congregational church and accepted the principle of a state-supported religious establishment. The governmental system was set firm on a representative,

[46] Hoadly, VII, 107.

[47] Hoadly, VII, 257.

[48] Hoadly, VII, 237.

[49] Hoadly, VII, 309.

[50] For discussion see Chapter XI.

> not democratic, basis, and although it was occasionally disturbed by the expanding jurisdiction of the imperial government, within the colony there was, on the whole, a placid political peace. The colonial economy was simple. Most of the people grew farm products for their own use. The small surplus that they produced was exchanged for English manufactured goods, imported chiefly through Boston, and some raw materials from the West Indies. But as yet the merchant class was small in number and relatively insignificant in influence.[51]

The Connecticut church under the Saybrook Platform and the influence of the Half-Way Covenant grew increasingly sluggish. An aura of social respectability surrounded it as it required only a good moral life of the Half-Way Covenant members and increasingly even dropped the requirement of a creditable profession of faith for full membership. Infants baptized under the Half-Way Covenant arrangement tended to grow up in the church without considering the necessity of profession of faith. When they became adults they commonly "owned the covenant," which meant that they agreed to the obligations of the Half-Way Covenant in order to win for themselves a relationship with the church such as their parents had enjoyed. A respectable, satisfied and complacent church establishment grew up in the "land of steady habits." Then fell the bombshell of the Great Awakening.

[51] Zeichner, p. 18.

PART II

THE STORY OF THE REVIVAL

CHAPTER II

PRELUDE

Writing about another event and on another occasion, Thomas Paine said, "These are the times that try men's souls."[1] Rector Thomas Clap of Yale must have felt the same way when his student body was fractured with controversy as the Great Awakening came to Connecticut. Several ministers of the colony no doubt had similar feelings as they experienced the sting of James Davenport's wild accusations about their spiritual state and as members of their congregations separated from them to form "purer" associations. Governor Jonathan Law and the Assembly men also wrung their hands over the commotion brought on by the Awakening. In 1742, when Davenport made a second preaching tour through Connecticut, he was apprehended on a warrant issued by the General Assembly itself and packed off to Long Island on a charge of vagrancy. Since the Assembly did not consider him in possession of his rational faculties, they chose to expel him rather than bring him to trial. Such a time of controversy was not what Connecticut citizens expected when they prayed for revival. All they had wanted was a renewal of spiritual life and an improvement of moral conditions in society.

Valley of Dry Bones

Just as the Old Testament Prophet Ezekiel caught a vision of his people as dead and about to be resurrected,[2] so periodically in their

[1] The Crisis, Number 1.

[2] Ezekiel 37.

sermons the clergy of Connecticut viewed their people as spiritually lifeless and in need of revival during the years prior to the Great Awakening. Typical of utterances from the pulpit, on election days and in sermons before the legislature is this statement by William Russell, pastor of the church at Middletown, in a sermon preached before the General Assembly: "The Country impreveth in Knowledge and Skill in Worldly business, but in Religious Knowledge, doth it not manifestly decay?"[3] These jeremiads, as well as those of Massachusetts preachers, spoke of moral decline, spiritual coldness, a general ease and security in sin and of judgment for the failures of the populace. Following the pronouncements of New England men of the early eighteenth century, more recent commentators have generally accepted the view that there was a real decline in the moral and spiritual condition of New England during the latter years of the seventeenth century and early years of the eighteenth.

L. G. Lavengood in his study of the Great Awakening in New England does not share this view. He states, "But there really seems no very good evidence that New England piety was any less puritan in this period than in previous years"[4] and ". . . it seems plain that in the first half of the eighteenth century the New England way in church and state was confronted much more with problems of adjustment than with problems of decay."[5]

[3] S. Leroy Blake, The Separates or Strict Congregationalists of New England (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1902), p. 32.

[4] See the unpublished dissertation (Chicago, 1953) by Lawrence G. Lavengood, "The Great Awakening and New England Society," p. 155.

[5] Lavengood, p. 170.

Moreover, he asserts:

> . . . ministers were resolved to "be much in Use of all proper Methods, that the power of Godliness may be revived among us"--not because New England had grown wicked, but because toward the end of the seventeenth century New England had run upon days that were universally described as days of more than ordinary temptation, and the temptations increased in severity and multiplied in number as the days were on into the eighteenth century.[6]

The temptations included such evils as increasing prosperity, wars and problems brought on by rapid population growth. Lavengood seems to feel that it was not so much to cure actual declension as to prevent declension that New England clergy hurled their threats and warnings at their congregations. He observes, ". . . crying judgment was one of the ways ministers acquitted themselves of . . . 'our duty to plow in hope.'"[7] Many of their warnings were especially addressed to the coming generation to get it to conform to the ways of their fathers. In partial support of his assertion Lavengood gives samplings from church records of lists of admission to membership by profession of faith, which indicate "that the health of the churches of the early eighteenth century was far from alarming."[8]

Though Lavengood has sounded a useful note in warning against accepting the jeremiads at face value, he has gone a little too far in dismissing claims of moral and spiritual decline in New England. The general statement of conditions made by Trumbull is still probably close to the truth:

> But as the good people who planted the country died, and the new generation came on, there was a sensible decline, as to the life and power of godliness. The generation, which succeeded, were not

[6] Lavengood, p. 100.

[7] Lavengood, p. 169.

[8] Lavengood, p. 190.

> in general so eminent and distinguished in their zeal, and strictness of morals, as their fathers. The third and fourth generations became still more generally inattentive to their spiritual concerns and manifested a greater declension from the purity and zeal of their ancestors. Though the preaching of the gospel was not altogether without success, and though there was tolerable peace and order in the churches; yet there was too generally a great decay, as to the life and power of godliness. There was a general ease and security in sin.[9]

Trumbull would not disagree with Lavengood in the latter's assertion of maintenance of the Puritan way with the passing decades. He would no doubt say, however, that New England Puritanism had institutionalized its way of life and that with the institutionalization much of the spiritual vigor of the early days had disappeared.

As to Lavengood's use of a sampling of church membership records to show that the health of New England churches during the early eighteenth century was not particularly decadent, it can only be said that he is far from conclusive. He notes only six churches, five of them from Massachusetts, to represent all of some 400 Congregational churches of New England in existence in this period.[10] One of the figures he cites includes the whole period of the Great Awakening; the large number of additions of the years of the Awakening covers up the fact that during earlier years of the century professions of faith were infrequent. A second includes the years 1740 and 1741 and should also probably be discounted. Three others include figures for years between 1730 and 1740, when revival fires were

[9] Benjamin Trumbull, A Complete History of Connecticut (New Haven: Maltby, Goldsmith and Co., 1818), II, 135.

[10] Ezra Stiles said there were 400 Congregational churches in New England in 1743; Edwin S. Gaustad, The Great Awakening in New England (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1965; orig. pub. 1957), p. 66.

beginning to stir--notably during the years 1734 and 1735. Membership records exist for about one third of the more than 100 Congregational churches existing in Connecticut during the first third of the eighteenth century. These show that admissions to full membership were few indeed, running from none to four or five a year on the average. In support of what the church records show, the historian of Wallingford (for which church membership records are not available) states that prior to the Awakening from year to year not more than one or two united with the church annually in that town.[11] But all during this period church records give names of fair numbers of respectable citizens who were owning the covenant and becoming half-way members. Thus the form of religion was being kept up, but the spirit was going out of it. Gaustad observes that the decline of piety "did not refer primarily to doctrinal dilution, episcopal or synodical encroachments. . . but to a laxity in personal morality and religion."[12]

Early eighteenth century Connecticut ministers were certainly not behind men of the cloth of other eras in preaching about a declining piety. Since ministers of all ages warn of declension in their time, the witness of the clergy to conditions before the Awakening may not be too useful. Perhaps concern of the Connecticut General Assembly is more significant for the present study. In 1714 it requested Governor Saltonstall "to recommend to the ministers to inquire strictly into the state of

[11] Charles H. S. Davis, History of Wallingford, Connecticut (Meriden, Conn.: Published by the Author, 1870), p. 299.

[12] Gaustad, pp. 13-14.

religion in every parish . . . that thereby all possible means may be used for our healing and recovery from our degeneracy."[13] The ministers made inquiry and reported back in 1715 through the General Association of the colony to the effect that there was a great want of Bibles, great neglect of public worship on the Sabbath, and that intemperance and other vices characterized many of their parishoners. The General Assembly then ordered all judges and justices of the peace to be diligent and strict to enforce all laws for the suppression and punishment of immorality and irreligion. Selectmen and constables were to see to it that every householder had a Bible, catechisms and other good books.[14]

In 1720 an alarming increase of intemperance in the colony led to renewed effort to suppress it. At this time a tax of fifteen pounds was levied on every hogshead of rum imported into the colony, one tenth of which should be paid to the naval officers and the rest to the colonial treasury. Any evasion of this law led to confiscation of the liquor.[15] In 1735 the General Assembly passed new stringent laws against burglary and for the control of the sale of wine and liquor.[16] Ellen Larned, distinguished historian of Windham County, was especially impressed with

[13] S. Leroy Blake, The Later History of the First Church of Christ in New London, Connecticut (New London: The Day Publishing Co., 1900), p. 104.

[14] Davis, p. 299; George L. Clark, A History of Connecticut (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1914), p. 264.

[15] Elizabeth H. Schenck, The History of Fairfield (New York: Published by the Author, 1889), II, 56.

[16] Schenck, II, 116; Charles J. Hoadly (ed.), The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut (Hartford: Case, Lockwood and Brainard, 1870) VII, 561.

the low moral state of the entire county during the years just prior to the Great Awakening:

> That the Windham churches with all their apparent prosperity, shared in the prevailing declension of the time, is quite probable. . . . But whatever the true state of religion in the days just reviewed by us, there is abundant evidence of a low state of morality. Within a few years, three Windham County ministers were deposed from the ministerial office on charge of scandalous offences; a young licentiate was forbidden to preach because of improper conduct and contumacy; a deacon was suspended from communion with the church "on conviction of excessive drinking;" a woman suffered the extreme penalty of the law for child-murder; one prominent physician was convicted of complicity in a kindred crime, and another walked the streets with a brand upon his forehead and a halter around his neck. Scarce a communion season was observed in any of these churches without the appearing of one, and often several, church members, to make public confession of some breach of morality. Scandalous charges against brethren of these churches were brought before every meeting of Association, and women were sentenced to fines, imprisonments and whipping at every session of the Court for gross and open immorality.[17]

Other indications of the decline of piety could be noted specifically here, but they will become evident in the following discussion of factors contributing to the declension. First, there was a loss of the initial zeal that characterized the founding fathers of Connecticut, because it does not seem to be psychologically possible to maintain intensive zeal for a very long period of time. It seems even more difficult for a generation that has launched a great mission to pass on to their children the same degree of enthusiasm for the project or program. Second, in connection with waning zeal came economic improvement and opportunity to have more worldly comforts. Third, the Half-Way Covenant made its impact. As a result of the Covenant, membership of the churches in full communion

[17] Ellen D. Larned, History of Windham County, Connecticut (Worcester, Mass.: Published by the Author, 1874-80), I, 394.

decreased. Having got their children baptized, relatively few of the parents came into full communion, and hardly any of the unmarried were found at the Lord's table. Comments Weisberger:

> By its terms the "unawakened" could enjoy a kind of partial membership, baptizing their children and joining in congregational activities, but not taking full communion. This was enough church affiliation for most political and social purposes, so that gradually the "saved" sank to a tiny minority. Orthodox writers grieved over mere formalism and worldliness in the churches, and wondered if New England had not "in great measure forgot the errand of our Fathers."[18]

The effect, then, was to quiet the conscience with something less than conversion and fill the churches with those who "knew nothing by experience of regeneration." Moreover, one could hardly expect that those who were themselves not spiritually motivated would either request or support church discipline for errant members.

Fourth, the church-state system of Connecticut under the control of the Saybrook Platform led to too much institutionalization of religion. Things were almost too easy for the ministers. They were inducted into a living at the time of appointment to oversight of a congregation and normally could hold that pastorate until physical incapacity or death. It was very difficult to secure a dismissal. Ministers sometimes grew a little too careless with sermon preparation and pastoral care. While it is true that ministerial salaries were often very low, they were generally regular and there were compensations in terms of social or political prestige that offset monetary lack.

Fifth, the state of war the colonies experienced almost without

[18] Bernard A. Weisberger, They Gathered at the River (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1958), pp. 53-4.

cessation for more than fifty years took Connecticut minds off spiritual things. King William's War broke out in 1689; the following year an expedition against Quebec was undertaken. Queen Anne's War started in 1703 and with it came the horrors of Indian incursions and atrocities. Hostility of the Indians and assaults of the French kept the colonists in a state of constant apprehension. Although the Peace of Utrecht in 1713 put an end to hostilities between France and England for a while, the French continued to incite the Indians who pillaged frontier settlements and captured many of the settlers. The history of the colonies from 1700 and earlier until the close of the Revolution reads like a story of a running fight, with only an occasional break in the narrative. War awakens alarm, arouses the worst passions of men, disturbs society and engrosses men's thoughts with matters that do not make for spiritual uplift. It drained off resources from the churches and removed men from the inhibitions of settled society.

Sixth, civil and religious strife also hampered maintenance of the spiritual life of Connecticut during the eighteenth century. One could begin a study on this subject with the effort of Sir Edmund Andros to bring all New England under his control in 1686 and the dramatic rescue of the colonial charter from Andros when he came to Hartford the following year. One could develop the account by describing the suspense in which the people of Connecticut were kept over boundary disputes with neighboring colonies. And he could fill in the details by referring to the almost constant struggles in the towns of Connecticut. If the towns could have grown more slowly, they might have worked out more amicable solutions to their disputes. But many of them experienced dynamic growth both in

numbers and economic development, with its accompanying upheaval in social stratification. Dynamic and continued growth did not permit static conditions or solutions; nagging issues recurred with a deadly regularity. Connecticut towns showed a marked incapacity to grow peacefully. Disputes over rights in the common lands grew more serious as towns became larger. More serious yet were the feuds that developed between sections of a town. The social, economic and political divisions in town society often came into clear focus when the question of locating a new meeting house or calling a new minister arose. Town and church histories abound with accounts of deep rifts in society and scurrilous attacks of townsmen on each other over the building of a meeting house, the calling of a minister, or even the dividing of the communion service or other church property when a town grew large enough to require two churches. These bitter factional squabbles often embroiled virtually the whole population for an extended period of time, in some instances perpetrating divisions that lasted down into the revolutionary period and later. Obviously the spiritual life of a community suffered terribly when these bitter fights erupted.

With the loss of religious zeal, brought on by economic improvement, the Half-Way Covenant, institutionalization of religion under the Saybrook Platform, warfare, and civil and religious strife, the religious life of Connecticut lost its old evangelical fervor. The churches were full of half-way members. To many, conversion was no longer essential and the Communion was looked on as a converting ordinance. Preparation for the kingdom of God with most churches was a matter of correct external conduct rather than faith in Jesus Christ, as the founding fathers had demanded.

Most of the people of Connecticut had fallen asleep in a complacency of a socially acceptable religious experience. Soon they would be awakened with a start.

The Dew of Heaven

Though calls for spiritual renewal had for a long time echoed down the entire length of the Connecticut Valley, the region had not been without seasons of revival. In Northampton, Jonathan Edwards' predecessor and grandfather, Solomon Steddard, enjoyed no less than five "harvests" during his long pasterate. These had taken place in 1679, 1683, 1696, 1712 and 1718.[19] In 1680 a fairly general revival had come to Massachusetts.[20] At East Windsor, Timothy Edwards, Jonathan's father, witnessed four or five revivals between the years 1694 and 1735.[21] Two years after Edwards' first ingathering of souls in 1696, Hartford experienced a revival.[22] But a special stirring had occurred at Windham in 1721, when in six months eighty persons made professions of faith and joined Samuel Whiting's congregation. Since there were scarcely 200 families in town at the time, almost every second family would have seen one of its members converted.[23] "The town was full of love, joy, thanksgiving and praise. . . . But while

[19] Trumbull, II, 135.

[20] Thomas Prince, Jr., The Christian History, I (1743), 107.

[21] Gaustad, p. 19.

[22] Williston Walker, A History of the Congregational Churches in the United States, 3d ed. (New York: The Christian Literature Co., 1896), p. 251.

[23] Trumbull, II, 136.

this place was so remarkably wet with the dew of heaven, the ground was dry all round it."[24] Bushman notes, however, that at nearby Norwich both parishes were quickened at this time and that Windsor had a revival in the same year.[25] Six years later, on October 29, 1727, an intense earthquake hit New England, terrifying the inhabitants. Since the rumblings in nature were interpreted as the warning voice of God, "there was a greater resort to ministers and to the house of God than before, and greater numbers were added to the churches. . ."[26] But it seon became evident that in this case fear rather than conviction had been the chief motivating force impelling men to seek God, and the intensity of the revival quickly abated.

Mercy Drops

If the earlier revivals of the eighteenth century are regarded as "the dew of heaven" on a dry and thirsty land, then the revivals of 1734 and 1735 may be described as "mercy drops." And both were to play a significant part in the preparation for the "showers of blessing" that would fall in 1740-1742. While the earlier revivals cannot be so specifically related to the movement of the 1740s as those of the 1730s, they were important to a continuing revivalism because New Englanders saw in them an indication that "God's controversy with New England" for her apostasy

[24] Trumbull, II, 136.

[25] See the unpublished dissertation (Harvard, 1960) by Richard L. Bushman, "Government and Society in Connecticut, 1690-1760," p. 266.

[26] Trumbull, II, 136.

had not resulted in the complete withdrawal of His hand of blessing. Moreover, some individuals who were to be significant in the later revival movement were converted earlier in the century. For instance, Elisha and Solomon Paine, who were to play an important part in the separate movement in eastern Connecticut after the Great Awakening, were both converted in the Windham revival of 1721. There is no question of the connection between the revivals of 1734 and 1735 and the Great Awakening proper. These movements further indicated to many that God was still very much concerned with the spiritual prosperity of the Connecticut Valley, and they created a yearning of clergy and layman alike for a repeat performance of even greater magnitude. Moreover, the numerical increase in church membership during 1734 and 1735 strengthened the base from which the greater effort would be launched in the 1740s. But especially, the revivals of the 1730s brought to the fore Jonathan Edwards, whose A Faithfull Narrative of Surprising Conversions created a new interest in revival not only in the Connecticut Valley but elsewhere in the New World and even in England and whose personal ministry in the Connecticut Valley promoted later revival activity.

Jonathan Edwards left his position as tutor at Yale to join his grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, in 1727 as associate minister in the parish at Northampton. On the death of Stoddard two years later, Edwards, at twenty-five, was left in sole charge of the parish, the most important Massachusetts parish outside of Boston. At that time Edwards was quite discouraged over the spiritual level of the town which was "very insensible of the things of religion." Nor was the picture to change greatly over the

next four years. During much of the year 1733 he preached sermons on positive themes, such as the joy of the saints, benevolence, honesty, practical Christian virtues and the beauty of holiness. As a result, there was a noticeable softening of attitude toward religious things. Then during 1734 Edwards joined verbal battle with the forces of Arminianism (with its preachment of salvation by works) that had filtered into his parish. In a series of sermons he attempted to combat point by point what he believed to be the false doctrines of his opponents.

> His refutation was in Calvinistic idiom: the sovereignty of God, his inexorable justice, particularly justification by faith alone . . . . His decision was the beginning of disharmony in the parish. It was also the beginning of the revival. . . . Opposition had of course created tension. Tension had supplied a favorable background for emotional excitements of the revival sort.[27]

After the fourth sermon in the series, The Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners, inquirers began to flock to the parsonage. The first professed conversions came in December, and one of these was one of the most depraved young women of the town. This provided the catalyst that gave the work its initial impetus. Starting with the young, the revival spread to all until "There was scarcely a single person in town, either old or young, that was left unconcerned about the great things of the eternal world."[28] Edwards believed that more than 300 were converted in the town of some 1100 in six months.[29] The sovereignty of God, so

[27] Ola E. Winslow, Jonathan Edwards (New York: Macmillan Co., 1940), p. 160.

[28] Jonathan Edwards, "A Faithfull Narrative of Surprising Conversions," The Works of President Edwards (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1881), III, 235--hereafter cited as Works.

[29] Edwards, Works, III, 239.

frequently expounded by New England ministers in the past, had commonly been treated in a cold theological manner. In the words of his biographer, as Edwards

> now interpreted this venerable doctrine, he seemed to be preaching a fresh, new truth. . . . Back of the familiar structure of Calvinistic thought. . . the fervent young preacher was putting the authority of his own personal religious experience. When he spoke of a satisfying spiritual joy, "a kind of effusion of God in the soul", he was not speaking the language of catechetical divinity as he had learned it in Ames' Medulla during his Yale College days; he was speaking out of his knowledge of spiritual things. Divine sovereignty, by this interpretation, was the doctrine which, hitherto "abhorrent", had immediately after his conversion appeared "exceeding pleasant, bright and sweet".[30]

What Edwards did at his strategic location on the Connecticut River north of the Connecticut line was bound to affect developments in the entire valley. Edwin Parker, historian of the Second Congregational Church of Hartford, commanted, "Jonathan Edwards proclaimed the message of salvation in trumpet tones whose echoes were heard far and wide, and all the dry bones of this valley commenced to stir with mysterious energy."[31] Although the Great Awakening as a general religious movement in New England and elsewhere dates to the 1740s, many would begin it with Edwards' revival in 1734-35. Charles E. Park is a good example of this group:

> For the Northampton revival was the beginning of the Great Awakening, the beginning of the new divinity, otherwise known as the New England Theology; the beginning of a new homoletical /sic./ style, a warmer, more appealing, more emotional evangelistic note in our preaching; and the beginning of a recrudescence of Puritanism, with its insistence on the soul's immediate responsibility to God, with its emphasis on moral obligation in thought, word, and deed, with

[30] Winslow, p. 154.

[31] Edwin P. Parker, History of the Second Church of Christ in Hartford (Hartford: Belknap and Warfield, 1892), p. 113.

its restoration of the individual conversion to its proper place in man's ultimate guide, throughout our New England communities.[32]

From Northampton news of the remarkable work quickly spread to nearby towns. Tradesmen, court officials and ministers all played their part in the dissemination. Pastors Benjamin Lord of Preston and John Owen of Groton traveled to Northampton in May of 1735 to see for themselves what was going on there. When they reported back to their congregations, a general awakening broke out in their parishes.[33] Contemporary with the movement at Northampton, the parish at Windsor under the leadership of Jonathan Marsh experienced "a very great ingathering." But these two revivals had no initial effect on each other because neither congregation knew that "the blessing of God" had descended on the other.[34] Numerous other revivals did have some relation to the awakening at Northampton, however. Edwards reported outpourings of the Spirit at East Windsor where his father, Timothy Edwards, was minister, at Coventry under Joseph Meacham, at Lebanon under Eleazar Wheelock, at Durham under Nathaniel Chauncey, at the first church of Stratford under Hezekiah Gould, at Ripton Parish (Stratford) under Jedidiah Mills, at New Haven under Joseph Noyes, at Guilford under Thomas Ruggles, at Mansfield under Eleazar Williams, at Tolland under Stephen Steele, at Hebron under Benjamin Pomeroy, at Bolton under Thomas White, at Suffield under Ebenezer Devotion and at

[32] Charles E. Park, The Beginnings of the Great Awakening (Lancaster, Mass.: Sons of the Descendants of the Colonial Clergy, 1943), p. 28.

[33] Prince, Christian History, I (1743), 125.

[34] Edwards, Works, III, 237.

Enfield.[35]

The extent to which these communities were affected by the Edwardean revival may be learned in part from church admission records. Records have been preserved for churches at Lebanon, New Haven, Mansfield, Bolton and Suffield and appear on the chart accompanying Chapter VII. In addition to revivals noted by Edwards, it will be seen that the chart in Chapter VII also indicates revivals of varying intensity at Cheshire, Colchester, Franklin, Goshen, Grisweld, Hampton, Milford, New London, Somers, West Hartford and Windham. Trumbull reported that the revival movement also reached down into New Jersey at this time.[36]

About the end of May, 1735, the revival at Northampton began to decline almost as suddenly as it began. Winslow gives as the reason the attempted suicide in the town of Thomas Stebbins and the actual suicide of Joseph Hawley, uncle to Jonathan Edwards. Says Miss Winslow, "The spell was broken," and "for the first time sobered men and women began to question the wholesomeness of the excitement under which they had been living."[37] Undeniably the town of Northampton was rocked by the suicide of Joseph Hawley, especially since it had come on Sunday morning and formed the topic of conversation at the meeting house all day. But it is also true that the ability of the human mechanism to maintain a high peak of excitement is limited. And Tracy well observes, "In the case before us, too, it is probable that nearly every person old enough to understand preaching

[35] Edwards, Works, III, 237-38.

[36] Trumbull, II, 141; Edwards, Works, III, 238.

[37] Winslow, p. 165.

had been excited, had been made to consider his ways, and had decided upon his course, at least for the present."[38] If some 300 had been converted out of a population of 1100, diminishing returns inevitably would set in. Tracy observes that for some months after the decline began there were still occasional conversions.[39] Elsewhere in the Connecticut Valley revival fires continued to burn on into 1736 and even 1737. No doubt in many of these places the revival declined, as in Northampton, because there were few others to be enlightened. For example, in the little town of Mansfield, eighty-five made professions of faith in 1735 and nineteen the following year. At the height of the Great Awakening in 1741 only thirty-one were converted in Mansfield.[40] At Bolton, thirty-six were converted in 1735 and thirty-four in 1741.[41] In the town of Colchester, sixty-eight made professions of faith in 1735-37 and only sixty-five at the height of the Great Awakening.[42] At New Haven, 137 made professions in 1735-37 and only thirty-six in 1741-42.[43] Perhaps these few examples help to show that in many towns the number "new-lighted" during the Great Awakening was not larger because so many had already made professions of faith a few years earlier.

[38] Joseph Tracy, The Great Awakening (Boston: Tappan and Dennet, 1842), p. 17.

[39] Tracy, p. 17.

[40] Records of the First Congregational Church of Mansfield, Vol. A, 11-18.

[41] Records of the Bolton Congregational Church, I, 127-46.

[42] Records of the First Congregational Church of Colchester, I, 4-6, 8.

[43] Franklin B. Dexter, Historical Catalogue of the Members of the First Church of Christ in New Haven, Connecticut (New Haven: Published by the Church, 1914), pp. 68-88.

Interest in the revival at Northampton caused Dr. Benjamin Colman of Boston to write Edwards for an account. The reply was forwarded to London and was well received there. In response to Colman's request for a more detailed account of the revival, Edwards in 1736 sent a treatise that was published in London as A Faithfull Narrative of Surprising Conversions. Circulated extensively, it created considerable interest in England and Scotland. In 1738 it was republished in Boston and during the same year a collection of Edwards' sermons preached at the height of the revival appeared in Boston bookstores. The fame of the Northampton revival rests largely on the popularity of Edwards' Narrative, which was widely read by his own generation and by many since. Lavengood observes:

> The celebrity of Edwards's Narrative resulted at least partly from the fact that several New England towns had experienced the same outpouring of religious influences a few years previously, or had been subject to it shortly after the revival began at Northampton, and were therefore eager to read a well-composed, highly authoritative account of similar work in a neighboring community. . . . The Narrative became, in fact, the textbook of New England revivalism in the years immediately following its publication, though, once again, Edwards's writing achieved this distinction because it so well described and so thoroughly justified the experiences many churches had undergone in the past three decades and that many others were longing to duplicate.[44]

Basically there are two kinds of religion: the religion of authority and the religion of the Spirit. In the former men prefer to put their religious interests into the hands of a mediating church or priesthood; for them religion becomes a matter of scrupulous fidelity to the outward laws and ceremonies of the church. Faith is institutionalized and the form of religion becomes paramount. In the latter men prefer to establish

[44] Lavengood, pp. 194-95.

immediate relations with God; for them religion becomes a matter of direct communion and personal experience. The religion of the Spirit had been characteristic of early New England, but over the succeeding generations the religion of authority had come to dominate. With the Edwardean revival and the later awakening the religion of the Spirit once more gained predominance.

CHAPTER III

GEORGE WHITEFIELD, MASTER REVIVALIST

Preparation for Whitefield's Coming

When George Whitefield left his lodging near Springfield, Massachusetts on Tuesday, October 21, and rode the eight miles to Suffield, Connecticut, he found the Colony ready for the awakening he sought to bring. For more than three years all churchgoing New England had yearned for a revival to match Northampton's, as they had learned about the "surprising work of God" there by word of mouth and Edwards' Faithfull Narrative. Connecticut residents had been prepared too by the "frontier revival" of 1734-35. Communities stirred in that revival longed for a renewal of the "blessed times." Those which had not participated in it hoped they would not be passed by in any new religious awakening that might come to the colony. Here it should be noted that the effects of the "frontier revival" had been almost entirely salutary; there were almost none of the divisive and controversial effects that would follow the Great Awakening.

The "frontier revival" had led pious men elsewhere to regard awakenings "as events to be desired, prayed for, and expected; and this expectation had been kept alive by their occasional occurrence, in single parishes, in different parts of the country. In 1739, such instances began to multiply, and to grow conspicuous."[1] Reports filtered into New England of

[1] Joseph Tracy, The Great Awakening (Boston: Tappan and Dennet, 1842), pp. 18-19.

revivals at such places in the Middle Colonies as Newark and New Brunswick, New Jersey and New Londonderry, Pennsylvania. Newark, originally a colony from Branford, Connecticut, began to experience the sparks of revival among the young people in August of 1739. By December the sparks had been fanned into a full blaze among the younger generation and subsequently caught fire among older members of the community. At its height in March of 1740, this revival abated during the summer.[2] Rev. Samuel Blair came to New Londonderry in November, 1739, and promptly began to stir up a revival there. By the following summer he had abundantly succeeded but did not report specific figures in his description of the awakening.[3] At about the same time Gilbert Tennent's congregation at New Brunswick was experiencing a revival.[4]

Throughout New England too revivals were taking place. In the town of Harvard, Massachusetts, an awakening began in September of 1739 that was destined to continue for two or three years;[5] and at Northampton, Massachusetts, Jonathan Edwards witnessed a new revival surge in the spring of 1740. This was destined to continue on through the coming of Whitefield to the town in October.[6] In Connecticut, in the little town of Cromwell (north of Middletown), fifteen professions of faith were reported in 1739

[2] Thomas Prince, Jr., The Christian History, I (1743), 252.

[3] Prince, Christian History, II (1744), 242.

[4] Tracy, p. 33.

[5] Prince, Christian History, II, (1744), 13.

[6] Prince, Christian History, I (1743), 367.

and fourteen the following year.[7] The church in the village of Franklin (formerly the second parish of Norwich) enjoyed sixteen additions in 1739 and ten in 1740.[8] The church at Woodstock in northern Windham county experienced a revival of three years' duration. In 1738 there were twenty-six professions, in 1739 there were thirteen and in 1740 there were twenty-five.[9] In the western part of the colony at Woodbury, the vibrant parish church enjoyed a new crescendo of spiritual vitality in 1739 when thirty-three made professions of faith.[10]

So a spirit of revivalism had been building up in the Middle Colonies under the inspiration of Dutch Reformed and Presbyterian leaders such as Theodore Freylinghuysen and the Tennents and in New England under the leadership of Edwards and as a result of the "frontier revival." There does not appear to be a direct influence of the Middle Colony group on New England before 1740.[11] Edwards was only vaguely aware of the existence of Frelinghuysen and his revivals when he wrote his Narrative and spelled the Dutch clergyman's name "Freelinghousen."[12] So, although the Great Awakening may be said to have started in a general sense in the 1720s with Frelinghuysen, there is no direct causative influence of the Dutch Reformed leader on Edwards' Northampton revival or the "frontier revival."

[7] Records of the First Congregational Church of Cromwell, I, 10-11.

[8] Records of the Franklin Congregational Church, pp. 27-32.

[9] Records of the First Congregational Church of Woodstock, pp. 161-66.

[10] Records of the First Congregational Church of Woodbury, Vol. I.

[11] Edwin S. Gaustad, The Great Awakening in New England (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1965; orig. pub., 1957), p. 24.

[12] Edwards, Works, III, 238.

Preparation for the coming of Whitefield and the Great Awakening to New England also took the form of extensive publication of writings designed to stir revival there. Although there was not yet either a newspaper or a printing press in Connecticut, ministers and other leaders in the colony frequently obtained newspapers and other printed materials from Boston. In 1739 the presses of New England's metropolis printed seven items from the pen of Gilbert Tennent and several by George Whitefield. In addition, the city's newspapers ran advertisements of books or tracts by or about Whitefield and of books recommended by Whitefield, as well as accounts of his successes elsewhere and eulogies of his piety and character.[13] Of course there was plenty of Whitefieldian success in the Middle Colonies to report in Boston papers. For example, when Whitefield arrived at Philadelphia in November, 1739, he had met with almost instant success. Crowds were so great that no building could hold them, so he preached frequently from the gallery of the courthouse in Market Street. The multitudes jammed the more than 400 feet between the courthouse and the wharf.[14] After spending part of the winter in Georgia looking after the needs of his newly-established orphan house, Whitefield again headed north in April. A contemporary report published in the New England Weekly Journal mentioned sermons preached by Whitefield to 3,000 at Wilmington (April 14) and to 800 at Society Hill, Philadelphia (April 15). On May 6 the Journal reported that on April 20 the evangelist had preached to 15,000 in Philadelphia.[15]

[13] Gaustad, p. 26.

[14] Tracy, p. 52.

[15] New England Weekly Journal, April 29, May 6, 1740.

Whitefield in Rhode Island and Massachusetts

When Whitefield arrived at Newport, Rhode Island, on September 14, New England was ready and waiting to be moved by him. In fact, Tracy observes: "There is even reason to suspect, that the manifestation of a revival, which was already secretly at work in men's hearts, was kept back for several months, by the general feeling, that it would take place when Whitefield came and not before."[16] From the moment Whitefield arrived at Newport, his reception was magnificent; and as he traveled through New England the pitch of excitement and expectancy increased. The evangelist preached four times in the town, in the morning and afternoon of Monday and Tuesday, September 15 and 16. On Tuesday night about 1,000 came to the house where he was staying. Every room in the house was filled and throngs stood outside. He stood in the doorway and preached to them for an hour.[17]

Resuming his journey on Wednesday, Whitefield came to Bristol, Rhode Island, about noon. He was asked to preach and a crowd hastily gathered. As he made his way to Boston the next day he found "the people were apprised of my coming, and solicitous for my preaching."[18] When about four miles from Boston, Whitefield was met by the governor's son and one or two ministers and others. On Friday, September 19, he was received by the governor in the morning and preached at Dr. Colman's church

[16] Tracy, p. 83.

[17] George Whitefield's Journals (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1960), p. 455.

[18] Whitefield's Journals, p. 456.

(Brattle Street Church) to about 4,000 in the afternoon.[19] The following morning he preached at the Old South Church to 6,000 and afterwards on Boston Common to 8,000 listeners.[20] Tracy indicates that Whitefield was not a good judge of numbers and that the congregation in the first instance was probably two to three thousand (so reported by a contemporary, Thomas Prince) and that in the second instance was under 3,000. The Old South would seat 1,216 in Whitefield's day. By packing aisles and stairs and jamming the area outside the church, the crowd might possibly have risen to 3,000.[21] On Sunday afternoon, September 21, Whitefield claims to have preached to 15,000 on Boston Common and the following day to 6,000 at the New North Church;[22] but Tracy notes that the congregation at New North could not have been more than at the Old South.[23] On Wednesday he claims to have preached to 7,000 in the court at Harvard[24] and the following Saturday afternoon to 15,000 on the Common.[25] Even if the figures are greatly exaggerated they indicate a general interest in spiritual concerns. A crowd of 10,000 on Boston Common probably would have included more than half the population of the city in 1740.

After a tremendous week in Boston, Whitefield went to Roxbury,

19 Whitefield's Journals, p. 459.

20 Whitefield's Journals, p. 459.

21 Tracy, p. 88.

22 Whitefield's Journals, p. 460.

23 Tracy, p. 88.

24 Whitefield's Journals, p. 462.

25 Whitefield's Journals, p. 464.

Marblehead, Ipswich, Newbury, Hampton, Portsmouth and as far north as York, Maine, and then retraced his steps to Boston, where he preached his farewell sermon October 12 on the Common to near twenty thousand people.[26] Tracy refers to a newspaper account of that day that estimated the crowd at 23,000.[27] Whitefield dined with Governor Belcher that day before the meeting on the Common, and the Governor took Whitefield in his own coach as far as Charleston ferry when the evangelist left the metropolis the following day.

The evangelist enjoyed a triumphant journey as he wended his way through Concord, Sudbury, Marlborough (to which Governor Belcher had followed him), Worcester, Leicester, Brookfield, Hadley and Hadfield, preaching to thousands at each stop.[28] On Friday afternoon, October 17, he reached Northampton, preaching in Edwards' church that afternoon, Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning. Each time he experienced "gracious meetings" with much weeping as he reminisced about the earlier revival among them, described the decline of their fervor, and as he preached about the privileges of saints and especially about the power of the Spirit on believers.[29] On Sunday evening Whitefield rode the eighteen miles to Westfield and preached to a great crowd there the next morning. Later in the day he traveled on to Springfield where he preached twice and then rode out to the home of a friend, four miles away. On the way to his

[26] Whitefield's Journals, p. 472.

[27] Tracy, p. 88.

[28] Whitefield's Journals, pp. 474-75.

[29] Whitefield's Journals, pp. 475-77.

lodging, after he left Springfield, his horse stumbled and pitched him flat on his face. Fortunately Whitefield landed in soft sand and was not badly hurt.

Ministry in Connecticut

Early Tuesday morning, October 21, Whitefield set out for Suffield, Connecticut, where he arrived in time to preach to several thousand at 11:00 a. m. As he came to Connecticut, news preceded him of his tremendous reception in the Bay Colony; of course the publicity kindled an unquenchable desire in the hearts of Connecticut men to hear him preach. On the way to Suffield an event occurred that was to be prophetic of the divisive or controversial effects of Whitefield's ministry in Connecticut and elsewhere in New England. While riding along he met a minister on the road and struck up a conversation with him. Whitefield took great exception to the man's belief that it was not absolutely necessary for Gospel ministers to be converted. In the sermon that Whitefield delivered shortly thereafter he emphasized strongly the necessity of the new birth and did not spare the many ministers present. Most of them were thankful for his plain dealing. "One of them, however, was offended; and so would be more of his stamp, if I were to continue longer in New England. Unconverted ministers are the bane of the Christian Church."[30] On this occasion Whitefield noted that he had been much impressed by a recent sermon by Gilbert Tennent, entitled The Danger of an Unconverted Ministry.

After dinner Whitefield hastened on to Windsor where he had a

[30] Whitefield's Journals, p. 478.

satisfying experience preaching to an already much revived congregation under the leadership of Jonathan Marsh, a "converted man." As soon as that sermon was over, Whitefield rode a mile and one half to East Windsor to preach to the congregation of Timothy Edwards, father of Jonathan, who had accompanied the evangelist from Northampton. Much impressed with the Timothy Edwards household, Whitefield wrote, "I fancied that I was sitting in the house of a Zacharias and Elizabeth."[31] The immense energy and dedication of Whitefield are well illustrated in the whirlwind activities of this one Tuesday. It would have been a tiring schedule for a contemporary minister with an automobile, how much more so if one tried to meet all these appointments on horseback!

After spending the night at the home of the elder Edwards, Whitefield and the Edwards bade farewell. On Wednesday the "Grand Itinerant" took to the road again. In the morning he preached to "many thousands" at Hartford, about three miles south of Windsor, and in the afternoon preached to "about the same number" at Weathersfield, another miles down the Connecticut River.[32] At Weathersfield, Whitefield was encouraged by the coming of Eleazar Wheelock from Lebanon and Benjamin Pomeroy from Hebron, "two young, faithful, and zealous ministers of Jesus Christ." Much more would be heard from these young men. Earlier in the day he had planned to preach to the congregations at Lebanon and Hebron and proceed to Plymouth and Rhode Island. But after "prayer and consultation with my

[31] Whitefield's Journals, p. 479.

[32] Whitefield's Journals, p. 479.

friends," he decided to go directly to New York.[33] So that night he rode the ten miles to Middletown and stayed at the home of William Russell, minister of the parish church there. Whitefield's account of his ministry at Middletown is extremely terse, "Preached to about four thousand people at eleven o'clock. . ."[34]

One may well suspect, however, that great deal of motion and commotion occurred here and everywhere else along the itinerary of Whitefield if several thousand people were to gather to hear him in places where only a few hundred lived. Moreover, there must have been a compelling urge that permeated the atmosphere, driving men and women to attend services where he preached. There must have been in the air a spirit of expectancy almost tantamount to an electric charge that coursed through the very beings of his hearers and created a religious sensation never before experienced in New England. Fortunately, in the case of Middletown the veil of suspicion may be lifted to reveal what actually happened. Nathan Cole, a farmer and carpenter of Kensington, about twelve miles northwest of Middletown, left an account of this memorable day in his autobiographical "Spiritual Travels," now on deposit in manuscript form at the Connecticut Historical Society in Hartford. No other piece so aptly describes the effect of Whitefield on New England. Therefore it is reproduced in entirety here. Something has been said earlier about the preparation of Connecticut inhabitants for the coming of Whitefield; this is clearly demonstrated in the early part of Cole's account:

[33] Whitefield's Journals, p. 479.

[34] Whitefield's Journals, p. 479.

Now it pleased God to send Mr Whitfield into this land; and my hearing of his preaching at Philadelphia, like one of the Old apostles, and many thousands flocking to hear him preach the Gospel; and great numbers were converted to Christ; I felt the Spirit of God drawing me by conviction; I longed to see and hear him, and wished he would come this way. I heard he was come to New York and the Jerseys and great multitudes flocking after him under great concern for their Souls which brought on my Concern more and more hoping soon to see him but next I heard he was at long Island; then at Boston and next at Northampton; then on a Sudden, in the morning about 8 or 9 of the Clock there came a messenger and said Mr Whitfield preached at Hartford and Weathersfield yesterday and is to preach at Middletown this morning at ten of the Clock, I was in my field at Work, I dropt my tool that I had in my hand and ran home to my wife telling her to make ready quickly to go and hear Mr Whitfield preach at Middletown, then run to my pasture for my horse with all my might; fearing that I should be too late; having my horse I with my wife soon mounted the horse and went forward as fast as I thought the horse could bear, and when my horse got much out of breath I would get down and put my wife on the Saddle and bid her ride as fast as she could and not Stop or Slack for me except I bad her and so I would run untill I was much out of breath; and then mount my horse again, and so I did several times to favour my horse; we improved every moment to get along as if we were fleeing for our lives; all the while fearing we should be too late to hear the Sermon, for we had twelve miles to ride double in little more than an hour and we went round by the upper houses parish and when we came within about half a mile or a mile of the Road that comes down from Hartford Weathersfield and Stepney to Middletown; on high land I saw before me a Cloud or fogg rising; I first thought it came from the great River, but as I came nearer the Road, I Heard a noise something like a low rumbling thunder and presently found it was the noise of Horses feet coming down the Road and this Cloud was a Cloud of dust made by the Horses feet; it arose some Rods into the the /sic./ air over the tops of Hills and trees and when I came within about 20 rods of the Road, I could see men and horses Sliping along in the Cloud like shadows and as I drew nearer it seemed like a steady Stream of horses and their riders, scarcely a horse more than his length behind another, all of a Lather and foam with sweat, their breath rolling out of their nostrils every Jump; every horse seemed to go with all his might to carry his rider to hear news from heaven for the saving of Souls, it made me tremble to see the Sight, how the world was in a Struggle; I found a Vacance between two horses to Slip in mine and my Wife said law our Cloaths will be all spoiled see how they look, for they were so Covered with dust, that they looked almost all of a Colour Coats, hats, Shirts, and horses: We went down in the Stream but heard no man speak a word all the way for 3 miles but every one pressing forward in great haste and when we got to Middletown old meeting house there was a great Multitude it was said to be 3 or 4000 of people Assembled together; we dismounted and shook of our Dust; and the ministers were then Coming to the meeting house; I

> turned and looked towards the Great River and saw the ferry boats Running swift backward and forward bringing Over loads of people and the Oars Rowed nimble and quick; every thing men horses and boats seemed to be Struggling for life; the land and banks over the river looked black with people and horses all along the 12 miles I saw no man at work in his field, but all seemed to be gone--When I saw Mr Whitfield come upon the Scaffold he lookt almost Angelical; a young, Slim, slender youth before some thousands of people with a bold undaunted Countenance, and my hearing how God was with him every where as he came along it Solemnized my mind; and put me into a trembling fear before he began to preach; for he looked as if he was Cloathed with Authority from the Great God; and a sweet sollome solemnity sat upon his brow And my hearing him preach, gave me a heart wound; By Gods blessing: my old Foundation was broken up, and I saw that my righteousness would not save me.[35]

After the memorable service at Middletown, Whitefield had lunch and rode fourteen miles to Wallingford, where he preached in the afternoon and then rode another fourteen miles to New Haven, where his gracious host was James Pierpont, brother-in-law to Jonathan Edwards. Friday morning, October 24, was destined to be a relatively quiet prelude to a very busy week-end in New Haven. Since it was a wet day and no announcement had been made of a preaching service, the evangelist decided to stay in and attend to the growing pile of personal business. But in the afternoon he preached to a joint session of the Council and Assembly, and the governor was present. In the evening he preached to a room full of people at his lodgings. On Saturday morning Whitefield was greatly encouraged by a conference with Jedidiah Mills, the minister at Ripton and had lunch with him and Rector Thomas Clap of Yale. Subsequently he preached twice to the students at the college with some evidence of a melting of hearts each time. Yale, with its hundred students, rector and three tutors, Whitefield estimated to be about one third the size of Harvard.[36] Sunday

[35] Nathan Cole, "Spiritual Travels," pp. 2-3.

[36] Whitefield's Journals, p. 480.

was another busy day. The evangelist preached to appreciative congregations in the morning and afternoon, was subsequently received by the governor who expressed his heartfelt thanks for Whitefield's ministry, preached in the early evening to a considerable crowd at his lodging and left at eight o'clock for Milford. He covered the ten miles by ten at night, with a stop on the way to minister at a private residence.

Each succeeding day of ministry proved to be about as long as the previous one. On Monday Whitefield preached in the morning at Milford with good success, rode four miles to Stratford in the afternoon and preached again and traveled the eight miles to Fairfield that night, arriving about ten. In spite of snow the congregation at Fairfield was large and responsive on Tuesday morning, but his service at Norwalk (twelve miles away) that afternoon was almost rained out by a violent downpour. Whitefield's last day in Connecticut (October 29) was destined to be a difficult one. He had ridden to Stanford on Tuesday night in the rain and apparently suffered from some inward trial during the night. In the morning he could not regain his composure nor even settle on a text for his sermon before entering the pulpit. At length he pulled himself together, however, and witnessed "the Blessed Spirit" moving on his hearers. After dinner in the evening he rode the eleven miles from Stanford to Rye in New York; the tour of New England was over.[37]

Before Whitefield launched his ministry in New York, he paused to give God thanks for sending him to New England and to reflect on religious conditions in the region:

[37] Whitefield's Journals, p. 481.

> I have now had an opportunity of seeing the greatest and most populous part of it. On many accounts, it certainly excels all other provinces in America; and, for the establishment of religion, perhaps all other parts of the world. . . . Every five miles or perhaps less, you have a meeting-house; and, I believe, there is no such thing as a pluralist or non-resident minister in both provinces /Connecticut and Massachusetts/. Many, nay most that preach, I fear, do not experimentally know Christ; yet I cannot see much worldly advantage to tempt them to take up the sacred function. Few country ministers, I have been informed, have sufficient money allowed them to maintain a family. God has remarkably, at sundry times in divers manners, poured out His Spirit in several parts; and it often refreshed my soul to hear of the faith of their good forefathers, who first settled in these parts. . . . I think the ministers preaching almost universally by note, is a mark that they have, in great measure, lost the old spirit of preaching. . . . The civil government of New England seems to be well regulated; and, I think, at the opening of all their courts, either the judge or a minister begins with a prayer. Family worship, I believe, is generally kept up; and the negroes are better used than in any other province I have yet seen. In short, I like New England exceeding well.[38]

An Evaluation of Whitefield's Ministry

For nearly six weeks Whitefield had held New England spellbound. Whole towns had fallen under his sway. All eyes and ears had hung on his lips and audiences greedily devoured his every word. Frequently the size of crowds had necessitated a transfer of meetings from churches to town commons or open fields. Thomas Prince, a chief Brahmin among the Boston clergy, expressed the sentiments of many of his colleagues when he wrote, "Surely God is with this Man of a Truth."[39] Samuel Hopkins, while a senior at Yale, wrote of his contact with Whitefield at the college in October, 1740:

[38] Whitefield's Journals, pp. 482-83.

[39] Prince, Christian History, II (1744), 360.

> The attention of the people in general was greatly awakened upon hearing the fame of him, that there was a remarkable preacher from England travelling through the country. The people flocked to hear him when he came to New Haven. Some travelled twenty miles out of the country to hear him. The assemblies were crowded, and remarkably attentive; people appeared generally to approve, and their conversation turned chiefly upon him and his preaching. Some disapproved of several things, which occasioned considerable disputes. I heard him when he preached in public, and when he expounded in private in the evening, and highly approved of him, and was impressed by what he said in public and in private.[40]

The question immediately arises as to why Whitefield was so successful. Something has already been said about the preparation for him, and that fact should not be underestimated. New England was ready for him when he came. Religion was still important to the average man; the gospel was sufficiently old to be easily understood; the pew was well grounded in doctrine; and the plan of salvation was as familiar as the alphabet. New England was also aware of her long apostasy, as proclaimed frequently by her clergy. Advance publicity had led both ministers and their congregations alike to believe that Whitefield was the man to build on the foundations well laid and awaken New Englanders from their spiritual slumber. Winslow has well said:

> Without disturbing the structure of belief as his hearers understood it, he made it seem new by merely changing the emphasis . . . . Whitefield provided the necessity for immediacy. Under his impassioned preaching each hearer felt himself alone in the whole universe pursued of God. If he were to escape damnation and obtain the key to heaven, he must do it today. After the sun set, it would be too late. Thus are revivals of religion born in all ages.[41]

[40] Quoted in Joseph Belcher, George Whitefield (New York: American Tract Society, 1857), p. 186.

[41] Ola E. Winslow, Jonathan Edwards (New York: Macmillan Co., 1940), p. 177.

Perry Miller put succinctly the great evangelist's relationship to the preparation for him:

> Whatever the explanation elsewhere, Whitefield's success in New England can be accounted for: he stepped into a situation prepared for him, he touched off a powder-keg that had long been building up to an explosion. Or, to speak more accurately, Jonathan Edwards had already put a match to the fuse, and Whitefield blew it into flame.[42]

While the preparation for Whitefield was of basic importance, no amount of preparation will of itself bring on the kind of movement engendered by the evangelist. He himself had to fulfill expectations; he had to produce. What, then, was this young man of twenty-five like and how did he perform? A contemporary, Thomas Prince of Boston, said he was a man of middle stature, slender body, fair complexion, comely appearance, sprightly and cheerful temper. He had uncommon endowments of mind, a wit quick and piercing, a lively imagination, a good memory and a clear and musical voice and a good command of it.[43] As already observed in connection with his itinerations, he was an indefatigable traveler and preacher.

Of special importance to Whitefield's success was his oratorical ability. Parkes claimed, "Whitefield was probably the most gifted orator of modern times. He had a voice which, in the open air, could carry his words without strain to enormous audiences; yet it had beauty as well as power. . ."[44] Sarah Edwards, wife of the eminent theologian of Northampton,

[42] Perry Miller, Jonathan Edwards (New York: William Sloane Associates, Inc., 1949), p. 133.

[43] Prince, Christian History, II (1744), 361.

[44] Henry B. Parkes, Jonathan Edwards (New York: Menton, Balch & Co., 1930), p. 140.

wrote the following estimation of Whitefield's preaching to her brother in New Haven on October 24, 1740:

> He makes less of the doctrines than our American preachers generally do, and aims more at affecting the heart. He is a born orator. You have already heard of his deep-toned, yet clear and melodious voice. It is perfect music. It is wonderful to see what a spell he casts over an audience by proclaiming the simplest truths of the Bible. I have seen upwards of a thousand people hang on his words with breathless silence, broken only by an occasional half-suppressed sob. He impresses the ignorant, and not less the half-educated and the refined.[45]

Whitefield overpowered his audiences with his flowing oratory and gesticulating delivery. To a people long accustomed to prepared, prosaic sermons, the extemporaneous offerings of the itinerant came to represent the words of an inspired prophet. No blind devotee of Whitefield, Ola Winslow paid great tribute to Whitefield's oratory:

> New England had always had ears for sermons well spoken, and had approved preachers powerful in tones as well as in truth but Whitefield's powers of voice were in a new category. David Garrick's alleged remark that he would give a hundred guineas if only he might say "Oh", as Whitefield uttered it, Lord Chesterfield's famous jest of tears wrung from men's eyes at the manipulation of Whitefield's tongue over the syllables Mes-o-po-ta-mi-a, Lord Bolingbroke's verdict, "The most commanding eloquence I ever heard in any person", and Hume's remark that it was worth going twenty miles to hear him, suggest, among many others, that only hyperbole could do justice to his powers of oratory and emotional compulsion. Of all his endowments for evangelism, his superb voice was the gift of God, par excellence. It had music, flexibility, volume.[46]

Perry Miller also added his testimony to the long line of those paying tribute to Whitefield's oratory: "In cold print his sermons are bombast, but when delivered out of his mighty lungs, they gathered up the anguish

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[45] Quoted in Edwin P. Parker, History of the Second Church of Christ in Hartford (Hartford: Belknap and Warfield, 1892), p. 114.

[46] Winslow, pp. 181-82.

and the cravings of the masses, who thereupon fell into weepings and convulsions, 'like persons that were hungering and thirsting after righteousness.'"[47]

Whitefield's success lay not only in his great voice and in the management of it but in his method as well. Winslow put the matter succinctly:

> The innovations of his method were half the source of his magic. In a week he had changed the whole definition of preaching and pulpit behavior. Instead of doctrine logically stated, proved, applied, according to a carefully prepared plan of argument, he dramatized both the biblical narrative and the application, spoke entirely without notes, made violent gestures, laughed, sang, shed public tears, and literally took New England by storm. Nothing like this had ever happened in the name of religion.[48]

Whitefield not only spoke without notes after preparation of his messages, but he also took advantage of every opportunity to drive home a point by means of impromptu preachments. One of the best examples of Whitefield in action, a brilliant specimen of his impromptu genius in the pulpit, appeared in a contemporary work in Boston entitled The Rebels. The entire selection is reproduced here:

> After he had finished his prayer, he knelt a long time in profound silence; and so powerfully had it affected the most heartless of his audience, that a stillness like that of the tomb pervaded the whole house.
>
> Before he commenced his sermon, long, darkening columns crowded the bright sunny sky of the morning, and swept their dull shadows over the building, in fearful augury of the storm that was approaching.
>
> "See that emblem of human life," said he, as he pointed to a flitting shadow. "It paused for a moment, and concealed the

[47] Miller, p. 133.

[48] Winslow, p. 181.

brightness of heaven from our view; but it is gone. And, where will you be, my hearers, when your lives have passed away like that dark cloud! Oh, dear friends, I see thousands sitting attentive with their eyes fixed on the poor unworthy preacher. In a few days we shall all meet at the judgment seat of Christ. We shall form part of that vast assembly which will gather before his throne. Every eye will behold the Judge. With a voice whose call you must abide and answer He will inquire, whether on earth you strove to enter in at the strait gate; whether you were supremely devoted to God; whether your hearts were absorbed in Him. My blood runs cold when I think how many of you will then seek to enter in, and shall not be able. O what plea can you make before the Judge of the whole earth? Can you say it has been your whole endeavour to mortify the flesh, with its affections and lusts? "No!" you must answer, "I made myself easy in the world, by flattering myself that all would end well; but I have deceived my own soul, and am lost."

"O false and hollow Christians, of what avail will it be that you have done many things? That you have read much in the sacred Word? That you have made long prayers? That you have attended religious duties, and appeared holy in the eyes of men? What will all this be, if, instead of loving God supremely, you have been supposing you should exalt yourselves in heaven by acts really polluted and unholy?

"And you rich men, wherefore do you hoard your silver? Wherefore count the price you have received for Him whom you every day crucify in your love of gain? Why, that, when you are too poor to buy a drop of cold water, your beloved son may be rolled into hell in his chariot, pillowed and cushioned.

"O sinner! by all your hopes of happiness, I beseech you to repent. Let not the wrath of God be awakened! Let not the fires of eternity be kindled against you! See there!" said the impassioned preacher, pointing to a flash of lightning, "it is a glance from the angry eye of Jehovah! Hark!" continued he, raising a finger in Listening attitude, as the thunder broke in a tremendous crash, "it was the voice of the Almighty as He passed by in His anger!"

As the sound died away Whitefield covered his face with his hands, and fell on his knees apparently lost in prayer. The storm passed rapidly by, and the sun, bursting forth, threw across the heavens the magnificent arch of peace. Rising and pointing to it the young preacher cried, "Look upon the rainbow, and praise Him who made it. Very beautiful it is in the brightness thereof. It compasseth the heaven about with glory and the hands of the Most High have bended it."

When, after this tour de force, Whitefield was asked to publish the sermon he replied with that quiet humour which often flashed

through his conversation, "I have no objection, if you will print the lightning, thunder, and rainbow with it."[49]

One must not be misled, however, into believing that Whitefield's success was due solely to his oratorical ability, his methods, and the preparation for him before his arrival. He was accepted too because he stood apart from the established clergy and all of the petty quarrels in which they had been involved, and yet he came with the approval of most of them. But preeminently, the genuineness of his own religious experience and the integrity of his zeal for other men's salvation are not to be questioned. It was, after all, the message of Whitefield that was being received, not just the messenger. His doctrine contained all the major Calvinist or Puritan beliefs preached in New England from the earliest days. These included the teaching that all men by nature were under sin and thus under the curse of God, that supernatural grace and the righteousness of Christ were the sole cause of the justification of the sinner, that Christ and His work must be received by faith by the believer, and that good works do not win justification but flow from it.[50]

Although Whitefield stuck close to the Calvinism of the Puritans (which was also the basic theology of Presbyterians and Dutch Reformed, among whom he ministered effectively), he breathed a catholic spirit in his preaching and prayed earnestly that God would destroy the bigotry and party zeal that divided Christians.[51] Thus he was well received by

[49] Quoted in Albert D. Belden, George Whitefield--The Awakener (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1953), pp. 110-111.

[50] Prince, Christian History, II (1744), 362.

[51] Prince, Christian History, II (1744), 363.

Puritans, Presbyterians, Dutch Reformed, some Baptists and others. Whitefield's ministry was made even more appealing by the emphasis of his message. Though he accepted the doctrine of hell he was no hellfire preacher. The burden of his preaching was that "everything was sinful which was not done with a single eye to God's glory. . ."[52] Ingersoll of Yale, who heard Whitefield in New Haven, said that the evangelist insisted chiefly on the doctrine of regeneration, the impotency of man to spiritual good and the new birth in order to salvation.[53] In evaluating the significance of Whitefield's preaching, Belden observed, "The movement started so powerfully by Jonathan Edwards and the school that gathered about his teaching would have smouldered and died after all too brief a blaze, if it had not been gathered up into the tenderer atmosphere and more positively healing revivalism of George Whitefield."[54]

Moreover, wittingly or unwittingly, Whitefield was in step with the shifting currents of the religious life of New England. Men had grown restive under the old system and wavered in their loyalty to it. There was some tendency to object to the tight control maintained over religion in Connecticut by the Saybrook Platform. Whitefield's preaching helped to engender a greater spirit of freedom and individualism. Winslow has well said:

> Under fire, he called himself a Calvinist, but his preaching emphasis was essentially democratic. Salvation was for all who would have it. In preaching a "whosoever will" doctrine at this particular moment, he gave a religious application to certain

[52] Parkes, p. 141.

[53] Jared Ingersoll, "An Historical Account of Some Affairs Relating to the Church, Especially in Connecticut," unpublished manuscript on file in the Library of Congress, entry under Oct. 20, 1740.

[54] Belden, p. 113.

> vague impulses toward democracy and turned an individualism as yet inarticulate into a gospel of personal safety. As the older ministry saw it, this was a return to the fabled piety of colonial days. In reality, it was a step toward 1776.[55]

While one must be careful not to see the Great Awakening as a political movement or merely a step to 1776, it is undeniable that especially in Connecticut it had democratic overtones. There the struggle with church establishment, the incidence of lay exhortation, lay involvement in the separatist movement and the increased expression of laymen in the work of the churches were all harbingers of a more democratic or individualistic outlook at least in religion.

While Whitefield was in New England, he carried all before him. Admittedly at Yale on October 25 he had preached on the dreadful consequences of an unconverted ministry,[56] and at the Old South Meeting House in Boston he had said at an earlier date "the generality of preachers talk of an unknown and unfelt Christ; and the reason why congregations have been so dead is, because they have had dead men preaching to them."[57] But these and other questions and utterances had been oral and probably would not have caused him permanent embarrassment. One is forced to agree with Benjamin Franklin's conclusion:

> I am satisfied that if he had never written anything, he would have left behind him a much more numerous and important sect; and his reputation, in that case, would have been growing even after his death; because, there being nothing of his writing on which to found a censure and give him a lower character, his proselytes would be

[55] Winslow, p. 176.

[56] Whitefield's Journals, p. 480.

[57] Williston Walker, A History of the Congregational Churches in the United States (3d ed., New York: The Christian Literature Co., 1898), p. 257.

> left at liberty to attribute to him as great a variety of excellences as their enthusiastic admiration might wish him to have possessed.[58]

No doubt Franklin's observation would have proved true even though Whitefield had put too much emphasis on emotional impulses for even some of his closest associates[59] and though he had made many unguarded remarks.[60]

Unfortunately for Whitefield he published another edition of his journal in Boston on April 6, 1741. In it he printed two jibes that would cost him dearly. The first was directed at the ministers of Massachusetts and Connecticut: "Many, nay most that preach, I fear do not experimentally know Christ. . ." The second was aimed at Harvard and Yale: "As for the Universities, I believe it may be said, their light is become Darkness, Darkness that may be felt, and is complained of by the most godly Ministers."[61] This was just the evidence that the vultures of controversy were waiting for. Ministers and college personnel both smarted under the barbs and lent their voices to attacks on the evangelist. Charles Chauncy[62] and William Brattle of Boston were among the most vocal critics of Whitefield. The evangelist tried to pour oil on the troubled

[58] From Franklin's memoirs, quoted in Luke Tyerman, The Life of the Reverend George Whitefield (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1876), I, 375.

[59] On the journey between Northampton and East Windsor, Jonathan Edwards admonished Whitefield about his attention to impulses, without success; Tracy, p. 100.

[60] Rev. Thomas Prince, father of the publisher and pastor of Old South, said of Whitefield, "Though Mr. Whitefield, now and then, dropped expressions that were not so accurate and guarded as we should expect from aged and long-studied ministers, yet I had the satisfaction to observe his readiness to receive correction as soon as offend." Tyerman, I, 423. Prince found Whitefield more tractable than did Edwards.

[61] William Wale (ed.), Whitefield's Journals (London: Henry J. Drane, n. d.), p. 485.

[62] See Charles Chauncy, Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion. . . Boston: Rogers and Fowle, 1743) and Enthusiasm Described and Caution'd against. . . (Boston: J. Draper, 1742).

waters by writing an open letter to Harvard and Yale[63] but to no avail; the damage had been done. As is noted subsequently, the faculties of both colleges later published testimonials against him. The charges of the opposition centered on enthusaism or emotionalism and impulses, hasty condemnation of ministers and the colleges, and itinerancy.

One of the best summaries of the pre-Whitefieldian position is found in William Hobby's contemporary A Defence of the Itinerancy and the Conduct of the Rev. Mr. Whitefield. To begin with, the author deplores the whole controversy:

> . . . the Disputes of many have been more for Party-Interest, than a just Zeal for Godliness; for Victory, rather than Truth: and then no Wonder we have met with more Heat than Light, and found so many with Mouths full of Religion, while the unhallowed Manner of their Debates has demonstrated, they had none at Heart.[64]

The writer contends that itinerancy is not against the Word of God and the Apostle Paul was a good example of that fact. Then he argues that "Whosoever opposeth this Order is an Enemy to the Church" is not true, for while "one faith" is fixed in the church "one order" is not.[65] He asserts, moreover, that itinerancy has caused many ministers to be more careful in their walk and preaching, that there is no evidence that Whitefield has used any money collected for the orphan house on himself, and that the criticism of Harvard might be useful in putting the school on its guard.[66]

[63] Works of the Reverend George Whitefield (London: Dilly, 1771-2), I, 296-97.

[64] William Hobby, A Defence of the Itinerancy and the Conduct of the Rev. Mr. Whitefield. . . (Boston: Rogers and Fowle, 1745), p. 3.

[65] Hobby, p. 6.

[66] Hobby, pp. 9-21.

Then Hobby concludes, "What then! shall I condemn him because He is not perfect? . . . The Sun itself has its Spots; shall we therefore try to put out the Sun? Vain Attempt! Neither would I shut my Eyes against Mr. W——d's Excellencies, and only open them to behold his Weaknesses."[67] No doubt some of the more impartial observers of the time would have put their observations into words similar to those of Edwin Parker, who wrote a history of the Second Congregational Church of Hartford in the nineteenth century:

> Whitefield was a man of God, and his work and memory merit great praise, but his zeal outran his discretion. . . . he lacked self-control, could not patiently endure opposition or provocation, and was easily betrayed into the expression of sharp, censorious, and unjust criticisms of others.[68]

[67] Hobby, p. 25.

[68] Parker, p. 115.

CHAPTER IV

FOLLOWERS IN HIS TRAIN

When George Whitefield left Connecticut on October 29, 1740, most of New England regretted his going. As yet few voices railed against him. He had engendered religious excitement but not many had made professions of faith as a result of his preaching, as a study of Connecticut church records demonstrates. If one can believe newspaper articles and other contemporary accounts, however, New England was astir and expectant that greater revival would follow. Whitefield had sowed the seeds of a new religious movement; others would have to cultivate, water and reap.

Gilbert Tennent

One of these was Gilbert Tennent. Born in the county of Armagh, Ireland, of Scotch-Irish Presbyterian parentage, he had come to this country at thirteen or fourteen. Gilbert received his education under his father's roof, and when Edinburgh-trained William Tennent opened his Log College (from which Princeton later developed) his son assisted him in teaching. The younger Tennent was licensed to preach by the Presbytery of Philadelphia in May of 1726 and was ordained that fall after accepting a call to the Presbyterian church of New Brunswick.[1] Subsequently he was active with other members of his illustrious family, Theodore Frelingjuysen and others in promoting revival in the Middle Colonies. In November of 1739, Whitefield preached at Gilbert Tennent's meeting house four times and traveled

[1] Archibald Alexander (ed.), Sermons and Essays by the Tennents and their Contemporaries (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1855), p. 7.

with him in New Jersey and New York. Whitefield was much impressed with Tennent and after a sermon by the latter in New York on November 14, 1739, the great evangelist remarked, "I. . . never before heard such a searching sermon. . . . Hypocrites must either be converted or enraged at his preaching. He is a son of thunder, and does not fear the faces of men."[2]

When Whitefield left New England and returned to the Middle Colonies in 1740, he met Gilbert Tennent on Staten Island on November 4. Tennent reported on his recent evangelistic efforts in West Jersey and Maryland. Two days later Whitefield preached at Tennent's church again and this time urged him to go to New England to continue the work so recently begun there. "He (diffident of himself) was at first unwilling, urging his inability for so great a work; but afterwards, being convinced it was the Divine will, he said, 'the will of the Lord be done.'"[3] Whitefield commended Tennent to Governor Belcher:

> This week Mr. Gilbert Tennent purposes to set out for Boston, in order to blow up the divine fire lately kindled there. I recommend him to your excellency as a solid, judicious, and zealous minister of the Lord Jesus Christ: he will be ready to preach daily: I suppose his brethren will readily open their doors. . ."[4]

Tennent arrived in Boston on December 13 and preached his farewell sermon on March 2, 1741. His ministry there was tremendously successful; hundreds were reported to have been converted. A great stir rustled through almost all of the congregations in town.[5] Tennent spent a good

[2] George Whitefield's Journals (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1960), pp. 347-8.

[3] Whitefield's Journals, pp. 347-8.

[4] Works of the Reverend George Whitefield (London: Dilly, 1771-2), I, 220-21.

[5] Thomas Prince, An Account of the Revival of Religion in Boston in the years 1740-1-2-3 (Boston, reprinted 1823), pp. 12 ff.

part of March in Connecticut.[6] During a week at New Haven he preached seventeen times and thousands were visibly affected. Three of his sermons weredelivered in the college hall. Over half of the Yale students made professions of faith under his ministry and many of them later found their way into the Presbyterian church.[7] Samuel Hopkins, while a student at Yale, spoke of attending a meeting conducted by Gilbert Tennent at which ". . . many cried out with distress and horror of mind, under a conviction of God's anger, and their constant exposedness to fall into endless destruction."[8]

On March 30 Tennent preached three times in New London: at noon, at three and again in the evening, at a time when night preaching was very unusual. All day he had large congregations, composed of both townsfolk and farmers who came in with their families. The next day he preached four times to even larger numbers, with people from nearby towns attending. On April 1 many accompanied him to East Lyme to hear him again and others joined the train along the road.[9] Building on the foundation that Whitefield had laid, Tennent did much to stir up revival fires all over New England. While his predecessor had moved rapidly through the region in a few days exciting men but not staying long enough to see them converted, Tennent moved more slowly with more visible effects.

[6] Thomas Prince, Jr., The Christian History, II (1744), 384, 387.

[7] Leonard J. Trinterud, The Forming of an American Tradition (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1949), p. 101.

[8] Samuel Hopkins, Sketches of the Life of the Late Rev. Samuel Hopkins (Hartford: Hudson & Goodwin, 1805), p. 31.

[9] Frances M. Caulkins, History of New London, Connecticut (New London: H. D. Utley, 1895), p. 449.

Opinions of the man Tennent and his ministry vary. But even the most friendly commentators cannot make of him the polished orator that Whitefield was. Timothy Cutler, a contemporary Anglican who was strongly opposed to the revival, referred to him as "a monster! impudent and noisy," who told his hearers "that they were damned! damned! damned! This charmed them; and, in the most dreadful winter I ever saw, people wallowed in snow, night and day, for the benefit of his beastly brayings; and many ended their days under these fatigues. . ."[10] Ola Winslow comments in much the same vein:

> Tennent chose literally to frighten men into salvation. His pulpit manners were violent instead of persuasive. As Esther Burr remarked in her Journal, he "would fain preach 'em to death if he could." His one theme was hell-fire and damnation. He raged, shouted, stamped, roared, and set nerves on edge beyond endurance.[11]

Morgan described him as a great boor of a man, sloppily dressed, boisterous of manner, who "flung himself at his audience with the clumsy but ineffective fury of an enraged bull." He roared with hearty, but presumably holy, laughter when he heard of a soul suffering under conviction.[12] In a more positive vein Parkes observes:

> There was Celtic mysticism about this strange Scotch-Irish evangelist; his sermons are still readable because of his passionate love for Christ and his passionate hatred of human nature; man at his best, to Gilbert Tennent, was "a filthy Leper, the basest Creature in all the Creation of God," and he deserved "the Damnation of Hell for the

[10] Quoted in Luke Tyerman, The Life of the Reverend George Whitefield (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1876), II, 125.

[11] Ola E. Winslow, Jonathan Edwards (New York: Macmillan Co., 1940), p. 189.

[12] Edmund S. Morgan, The Gentle Puritan (New Yaven: Yale University Press, 1962), p. 26.

> Corruptions of his best Prayers, Tears, and other Acts of Obedience." Hellfire and salvation by faith were the only themes of his preaching; and in spite of his clumsy gestures, his harsh and bellowing voice, and his savage appearance, he was a most successful revivalist.[13]

No doubt part of the problem of interpreting Tennent comes clear in an observation by Jared Ingersoll in his contemporary account. He noted that some disapproved of Tennent's conduct but others looked more on the success of his labors and even undertook his way of itinerant preaching. Thus divisions and contentions were produced. Ingersoll went on to observe that Tennent has great success, speaks much of the "woful Effects of a Carnal ministry, insists much upon persons being able to give something of a distinct account of their experience of a work of Grace upon their hearts in order to their being deemed Christians by ye Law of Charity."[14]

Tennent's famous pronouncements of 1740, published as The Danger of an Unconverted Ministry,[15] and his emotional stance continued to characterize his sermons during the next year or two. But in July, 1742, he experienced a change of heart over the revival. In a letter to the Reverend Mr. Jonathan Dickinson of New Jersey, he recanted his own excesses and condemned his previous emphasis on emotion and exhortation to parishoners to separate from ministers whom they did not approve. Dickinson gave the letter to Thomas Clap of Yale who sent it off for

[13] Henry B. Parkes, Jonathan Edwards (New York: Monton, Balch & Company, 1930), p. 146.

[14] Jared Ingersoll, "An Historical Account of Some Affairs Relating to the Church, Especially in Connecticut," unpublished manuscript on file in the Library of Congress, dated 1740, but covering events of years immediately following.

[15] Gilbert Tennent, The Danger of an Unconverted Ministry. . . (Boston: Rogers and Fowle, 1742).

publication to the Boston Evening Post.[16] Tennent was outraged over the impropriety.

Thomas Prince, pastor of the Old South Church in Boston, wrote something of an apology for Tennent in his day. He said that Tennent was:

> a man of considerable parts and learning; free, gentle, condescending. . . he had as deep an acquaintance with the experimental part of religion as any I have conversed with. . . He seemed to have no regard to please the eyes of his hearers with agreeable gesture, nor their ears with delivery, nor their fancy with language; but to aim directly at their hearts and consciences. . . . From the terrible and deep convictions he had passed through in his own soul, he seemed to have such a lively view of the divine majesty. . . that the very terrors of God seemed to rise in his mind afresh, when he displayed and brandished them in the eyes of unreconciled sinners.[17]

Alexander was even kinder to the evangelist. He claimed that Tennent's preaching was popular and attractive with all classes of hearers and that he possessed uncommon advantages as a preacher. Tennent was taller than usual and well proportioned in every respect. His voice was clear and commanding and his manner in the pulpit earnest and impressive. His reasoning powers were strong, his style copious and sometimes elegant.[18]

James Davenport

Whatever one may say of some of the excesses of Gilbert Tennent, he was no James Davenport. A native of Stamford, Connecticut, Davenport was born in 1716 or 1717 and was one of the youngest to enter Yale, where he

[16] July 26, 1742.

[17] Tyerman, I, 424.

[18] Alexander, p. 8.

was a brilliant student.[19] During college days he came under the influence of David Ferris, a fanatical Quaker from New Milford.[20] Graduating in 1732, Davenport was ordained pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Southold, Long Island, six years later. When reports of Whitefield's success reached Long Island, Davenport and his friend Jonathan Barber of nearby Oyster Ponds were much impressed and began to pray that they too might be instruments for the promotion of the revival. Barber claimed to have received a "vision" in which he was instructed to engage in evangelistic labors. After he related this experience to Davenport, the latter began his revival ministry early in March.

Starting with his own congregation, Davenport gathered them at the parsonage and addressed them for almost twenty-four hours. Apparently the physical and emotional drain of this experience on his system was a culminating blow to a body that had been under strain of spiritual exercises for some weeks. He was confined to his room for several days, and a physical condition arose at this time which seemingly was to affect his mind.[21] Soon he divided his congregation into those whom he deemed to be converted (dubbed "brother") and unconverted (dubbed "neighbor"). The latter were forbidden to attend the communion services. Considerable excitement followed this act, but he believed that about twenty were

[19] Louis L. Tucker, Puritan Protagonist (Chapel Hill, N. C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1962), p. 125.

[20] George N. Boardman, A History of New England Theology (New York: A. D. F. Randolph Co., 1899), p. 43.

[21] Tucker, p. 126.

converted shortly thereafter.[22] Subsequently Davenport was invited to Easthampton, Long Island, where another twenty reportedly were converted.[23]

Davenport first met Whitefield in New York on May 2. On that occasion Whitefield was much pleased with the young evangelist and recorded in his Journal:

> He is looked upon as an enthusiast and a madman by many of his reverend pharisaical brethren; and, as far as I can find, there is as great an enmity against the work of God in the hearts of most even of the Dissenters, (though they preach the doctrines of grace), as there is in our clergy, who, for the generality, entirely disown them. As Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth. But I trust they will not proceed much further; for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was.[24]

After Whitefield completed his first tour of New England, he was delighted to see "his dear brother Davenport" in New York on October 30, 1740.[25] On November 5 Whitefield reached Baskinridge, New Jersey, where Davenport had been preaching. During subsequent days Davenport traveled in the Whitefield company through New Jersey and at Philadelphia. At a later time Whitefield was to declare of Davenport, "of all men living, he knew of none who kept a closer walk with God."[26]

After several months in obscurity, presumably spent in ministering to his own congregation, Davenport began his first evangelistic tour of

[22] Joseph Tracy, The Great Awakening (Boston: Tappan & Dennet, 1842), p. 233.

[23] Tracy, p. 234.

[24] Whitefield's Journals, pp. 416-17.

[25] Whitefield's Journals, p. 484.

[26] Franklin B. Dexter, Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale College, 1701-1745 (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1885), I, 450.

Connecticut in July, 1741. His preaching was especially characterized by extravagant denunciations of ministers whom he deemed unconverted and by extreme emotionalism on the part of hearers in his meetings. Davenport apparently crossed over the sound from Southold to New London. He preached his first sermon there on the evening of July 18 at the meeting house. Several women fainted or went into hysterics under the emotional preaching of Davenport. After the service he went singing through the streets in a loud and raucous manner.[27] The eminent Joshua Hempstead of New London commented on the event in his diary:

> Divers women were terrified and cried out exceedingly. When Mr. Davenport had dismissed the congregation some went out, others stayed. He then went into the broad alley, which was much crowded, and there screamed out, "Come to Christ! Come to Christ! Come away! Come away!" Then he went into the third pew on the women's side and kept there, sometimes singing, sometimes praying; he & companions all taking their turn & the women fainting & in hysterics. This continued till ten o'clock at night, and then he went off singing through the streets.[28]

Davenport also visited the North Parish of New London and preached there in his customary violent and denunciatory manner. When David Jewett, parish minister, declined to give Davenport an account of his religious experience, the evangelist declared in public that he feared that Mr. Jewett was an unconverted person. He also condemned the venerable Eliphalet Adams of New London's first parish.[29]

From New London Davenport went to Groton for four or five days of

[27] Caulkins, p. 450.

[28] Joshua Hempstead, "Diary of Joshua Hempstead of New London, Connecticut," Proceedings of the New London County Historical Society, I (1901), 379.

[29] Tracy, p. 235.

meetings, preaching to audiences of about 1,000. On July 23 he continued his meeting until two in the morning and some hearers remained all night under an oak tree and in the meeting house. About sixty supposedly were converted. On July 24 he preached in the west meeting house in Stonington, where it is said that about 100 (including about twenty Indians) were struck under conviction during his first sermon and converted during the next eight days.[30] On Sunday, July 26, Davenport appeared at the center meeting house in Stonington, where Nathaniel Eells was pastor. When Eells did not invite the itinerant into his pulpit, he began preaching under the trees nearby and condemned Eells for want of fervor and spirituality.[31] Joshua Hempstead was present on this occasion. He started out as a member of Davenport's audience but decided that he was too condemnatory of Eells, so Hempstead withdrew into the meeting house, where Eells preached.[32] Apparently from Stonington Davenport moved over into Rhode Island.

Late August found Davenport in Saybrook and other nearby places, making a great impression on multitudes of people by means of his intense earnestness, but denouncing those who thought his zeal the result of derangement, especially if they were ministers. On August 25 he applied to William Hart for permission to preach at the Saybrook meeting house. After a long interrogation about Davenport's practice of pronouncing ministers and others as unconverted, Hart refused him permission to use the church. At this point Davenport announced to his attendants, "Come,

[30] Tracy, p. 235.

[31] Caulkins, p. 451.

[32] Hempstead, p. 380.

let us go forth without the camp, after the Lord Jesus, bearing his reproach. O, 'tis pleasant to suffer reproach for the blessed Jesus! Sweet Jesus!" When four ministers, including Hart, called on Davenport the next day to discuss further his conduct, he lectured them violently and offered a prayer for their conversion in their presence.[33]

On his way to New Haven Davenport continued to call on ministers, demanding an account of their religious experience and publicly classifying them as converted or unconverted. When he arrived in New Haven early in September just before commencement, he received a favorable reception. He was the great grandson of the first pastor of the town, John Davenport, was related to several of the better families, and had a reputation for great piety--a fact that would appeal to a town that had been experiencing a revival for several months. Joseph Noyes, pastor of the church, invited Davenport into his pulpit. But when Davenport had the audacity to declare that Noyes was an unconverted man, he was naturally henceforth excluded from Noyes' pulpit. Having decided that Noyes was unconverted, he advised his congregation to leave him, which a substantial number did.[34] Yale students who opposed Noyes were happy with Davenport's condemnation.

[33] Tracy, p. 236.

[34] Among the reasons Davenport gave for judging Noyes unconverted were that he was not a friend to the revival, his preaching had a deadening effect spiritually, and in private conversation with Noyes he had judged that the latter was unconverted. Boston Post Boy, September 21, 1741. After Davenport turned on Noyes, Clap took the iniative in having Davenport arraigned before a committee of the First Church to demand an explanation for the evangelist's actions. Davenport appeared for the meeting but threw it into complete confusion with his irrational actions. Boston Post Boy, October 5, 1741; Charles Chauncy, Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion (Boston: Rogers and Fowle, 1743), pp. 157-61.

Jared Ingersoll, in his contemporary Historical Account, described the confusion caused by Davenport and especially referred to his practice of accusing his opponents of unregeneracy. He

> . . . calls them by name Wolfs in Sheeps Cloathing, Ministers of Satan and the like, Charges their hearers by all thats Sacred and dear to them not to hear them preach, but to meet by themselves, which is done accordingly by some, Absenting themselves from ye Publick Stated worship, upon which follows presentments, disputings, jarrings and discord. /He/ . . . seems to lay too much stress upon inward feelings and immediate dictates of the Spirit.[35]

The Yale trustees were determined to put a stop to student judgment of college officials on spiritual grounds. On September 9, commencement day, they voted "that if any Student of this College shall directly or indirectly say, that the Rector, either of the Trustees or Tutors are Hypocrites, carnall or unconverted Men, he Shall for the first Offence make a publick Confession in the Hall, and for the Second Offence be expell'd."[36] In the same month a disillusioned Governor Talcott suggested that "perhaps the least difficult and Most safe Method of dealing with so boysterous a person /as Davenport/ . . . might . . . be, to send him by boat or otherwise out of this Government, that he may go to his own people."[37] In late September Davenport returned to Southold for the winter.

With his unreasoned approach to ecclesiastical practices, Davenport had stirred up a hornet's nest in Connecticut. Comments Trumbull:

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[35] Ingersoll, entry dated September 7, 1741.

[36] Franklin B. Dexter, Documentary History of Yale University (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1916), p. 351.

[37] "Talcott Papers, 1724-41," Connecticut Historical Society Collections, IV (1892), 373.

> He was . . . the great encourager, if not the first setter up of public exhorters, not restricting them according to the gospel rule of brotherly exhortation; but encouraging any who were reputed to be lively, zealous christians, to exhort publicly in full assemblies, with ministerial assurance and authority, though altogether raw and unskilful in the word of righteousness.[38]

The result was confusion and bitterness. Not only were law and order in danger of breaking down in many communities, but the whole ecclesiastical establishment faced disruption. When Davenport crossed the Sound for home, the New Haven clergy lost no time in petitioning the General Assembly for regulation of ecclesiastical matters. On October 8 they put before the Assembly a petition calling for a general consociation of the churches of the colony to be convened at Guilford on November 24, to consist of three ministers and three laymen from each of the county consociations, for the purpose of dealing with disorder and confusion then abroad. The General Assembly approved the petition and agreed to pay the expenses of the consociation.[39]

Accordingly the general consociation met at Guilford on November 24. Ingersoll reported on their decisions the following day. The ecclesiastics declared that while the recent work was of God it was mixed up with error. Errors proscribed were the practice of ministers' leaving their own flocks to preach within other men's precincts and people leaving their own ministers on their supposed unregenerancy. The august body concluded that no minister ought to preach in another's parish without the latter's

[38] Benjamin Trumbull, A Complete History of Connecticut (New Haven: Maltby, Goldsmith & Co., 1818), II, 161.

[39] Connecticut Archives: Ecclesiastical Affairs, VII, 243; located in Connecticut State Library.

consent and that immorality or heterodoxy in a minister were the only just grounds of separation from him. Moreover, candidates for the ministry should be men of learning, prudence and piety.[40]

The following May the General Assembly implemented the recommendations of the general consociation in "An Act for regulating abuses and correcting disorders in ecclesiastical affairs."[41] Taking it for granted that the Saybrook Platform had been imposed by law on all the churches (a fact never established because the Platform was presumably not binding on any church not voting to accept it) the Assembly proceeded to write the following provisions into law:

1. A minister or other individual licensed to preach who enters a parish other than his own to preach, when not invited by the minister and people of that parish, shall lose his support as provided by the laws of the colony.

2. If an association of ministers shall license a candidate for the ministry or pronounce on a controversy properly in the jurisdiction of another association, every member of that association shall lose his support.

3. If an individual not settled or ordained as a minister preaches in a parish where he has not been invited, he shall on complaint be bound over to good behavior until the next county court in the county where the offence was committed in the sum of 100 pounds.

[40] Ingersoll, entry dated November 25, 1741.

[41] Charles J. Hoadly (ed.), The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut (Hartford: Case, Lockwood and Brainard, 1870), VIII, 455-57; Trumbull, II, 162-65.

4. A person not an inhabitant of the colony who has not been invited to preach by the minister and a majority of his congregation shall on his preaching be sent as a vagrant person from constable to constable and thus out of the colony.

The law gives evidence of having been hastily drawn and at best was ill-advised. As Trumbull observed:

> Instead of preserving the peace and order of the churches, it was a means of separation and division. It could have no good effect: law opposed to enthusiasm, is only like heaping fuel upon the fire to quench it . . . . With respect to enthusiasts, mild measures, kind and christian treatment, have always succeeded the best.[42]

The more oppressive the measures used to destroy religious irregularity in Connecticut, the more violent became the enthusiasts.

Hardly was the ink dry on the Act when James Davenport was back in Connecticut. On May 29 two laymen of Ripton parish in Stratford appeared before the General Assembly to file a complaint that Davenport had arrived about ten days before and Benjamin Pomeroy of Hebron soon afterward and that their religious exercises were inflaming the townspeople and disturbing the peace of the town.[43] A warrant was issued and the pair was brought before the assembly at Hartford on June 1. The trial took place in the meeting house of the First Congregational Church there and lasted two days. Hartford was in a state of great excitement all during the trial. Partisans on either side rushed to support or hinder the sheriff. Several times it appeared that the prisoners would be rescued from his custody. Near riot conditions existed during the night

[42] Trumbull, II, 166.

[43] Tracy, p. 238.

between the two days of trial. On the morning of the second day the militia were ordered out to suppress disorder. The Assembly adjudged Davenport to be "disturbed in the rational faculties of his mind" and directed that he be sent out of the colony. So about 4:00 p. m. he was marched "between two files of musketiers" from the meeting house down to the Connecticut River and put aboard a boat for his home. The case against Pomeroy was dismissed but he was rudely treated and narrowly escaped serious injury when an attempt was made to throw him down the stairs of the state house.[44]

Undaunted, Davenport was off for Massachusetts in a few days. On June 25 he arrived at Charlestown and shortly thereafter began to preach in Boston. On July 1 the ministers of the city (friends of the revival) drew up a declaration against him. While they felt that he was probably a sincere and pious man, they were opposed to his impulsive actions, condemnation of supposedly unconverted ministers, encouragement of lay exhorters and disorderly singing in the streets. They closed the doors of their churches gently but firmly in his face; it was clear that they wanted to dissociate themselves completely from his extremes.[45] Since it was summer Davenport could get along without Boston churches. He preached on the Common during July and August, declaring that the ministers were unconverted and urging their people to withdraw from their pastors and form "pure" associations. Many did. Finally, on August 19 the grand jury

[44] Commemorative Exercises of the First Church of Christ in Hartford at its Two Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary (Hartford: Case, Lockwood & Brainard Co., 1883), p. 79.

[45] For a complete text of this declaration see Tracy, pp. 242-43.

presented him for malicious and slanderous speeches. Several ministers of the city addressed a memorandum to the court urging that no severity be used against Davenport on their account. The verdict of the court was that Davenport was non compos mentis when he uttered the slanderous statements and therefore not guilty.[46]

But Davenport's troubles were not over. When he returned to his congregation at Southold, they brought charges against him on October 7 for "His leaving his congregation, at several times, for a great while together, at his will and pleasure, without leave or consent of the church or society."[47] Apparently he stayed home and attended to his business during the winter.

Meanwhile, the spirit of excitement that Davenport had done much to instill was raging in eastern Connecticut. David Brainerd wrote to Joseph Bellamy at Bethlehem on February 4, 1742, that a false zeal and disorderly conduct had gripped the churches in New London and Stonington.[48] About the same time that Brainerd penned this letter, others were writing from New London to Davenport to invite him to minister among them and organize them into a church. The unguided missile arrived at least by February 27, because Hempstead heard him on that day. He wrote in his diary that Davenport's sermon "was Scarcely worth the hearing." It was a confused medly of praying and preaching, with no text nor Bible visible and there was nothing regular about his doctrine. He kept repeating over and over

[46] Tracy, p. 248.

[47] Tracy, p. 244.

[48] Caulkins, p. 452.

"the hand of the Lord is upon me" and other phrases. Some of these he repeated as many as thirty to forty times.[49] Apparently Davenport practiced a kind of mass hypnosis. Describing his actions on another occasion, Morgan commented:

> He was most impressive at night, when one could see him on the platform, his face lit by flickering, smoking candles, waving his arms, stamping his feet, screaming with rage or joy, the audience swaying before him, as now one person and then another fell to the floor and rolled or jerked in helpless spasms, or leapt for joy and embraced his companions, while a chorus of animal sounds rose up on all sides. Davenport could keep it up for hours until the people went home overcome with holiness or disgust.[50]

Chauncy alleged that Davenport sometimes became so aroused while preaching that he would remove his clothes from the waist up and while gesticulating wildly with his arms he would shout and scream at the highest pitch he could attain.[51]

Davenport set about to "purify" the congregation at New London of their idolatrous love of worldly things. In obedience to what he said was a message from God, he ordered a great bonfire of vanities. These included not only fine clothes and jewelry but heretical books as well. Among the authors were Increase Mather, Benjamin Colman and even the revivalist Jonathan Parsons of Lyme. As the embers of that bonfire died out by the New London town wharf on March 6, so did much of the spirit of the revival. Men were suddenly sobered by the excesses of the extremists in eastern Connecticut as they had been by the extremists in Boston. A council of

[49] Hempstead, p. 406.

[50] Morgan, p. 32.

[51] Charles Chauncy, Enthusiasm Described and Caution'd Against (Boston: J. Draper, 1742), pp. 98-99.

pre-revival ministers met at the house of Pastor Eliphalet Adams of New London to consult respecting the disorders. Jonathan Edwards came down from Northampton, Solomon Williams from Lebanon, Benjamin Lord from Norwich, Joseph Meacham from Coventry, Joseph Bellamy from Bethlehem, and other lesser lights from elsewhere in Connecticut. The council met on March 30 and the following morning Edwards preached against prevailing disorders caused by enthusiasm. Then the crowd moved to the courthouse where the main actors in the benfire scene were tried for profaning the Sabbath. The case was continued by adjournment to April 5, at which time five of the leaders were fined and Davenport was ordered by the General Assembly to leave the colony and not to return. After this the separate society of New London never got a leader. Timothy Allen, who had been involved in establishing the Shepherd's Tent for training separatist ministers there, left them after the trial. In a few years the separatists ceased to exist as a group.[52]

Davenport dropped out of sight until the summer of 1744 when he published a retraction of his errors. Solomon Williams and Eleazar Wheelock were instrumental in obtaining the confession. Williams then sent the retraction to the Boston papers at the request of Davenport. The enthusiast admitted that he had been characterized by a misguided zeal and specifically confessed: 1. his practice of openly denouncing some ministers as being unconverted and of doing so on slender grounds; 2. his practice of urging separations from such ministers; 3. his being led astray by following impulses or impressions as a rule of conduct, whether

[52] Caulkins, pp. 454-57.

or not founded on Scripture; 4. his having done much hurt by encouraging private persons to ministerial exhorting which puffed them up and caused others to be prejudiced against the work; 5. his offense given by singing in the streets. He also lamented his failure to accept counsel to give up his excesses and repented of the bonfire at New London. According to his statement he was actually ill at the time of the latter.[53] In fact, he was ill during the whole period of his itinerations; the disease seems to have reached its peak in March of 1743 while he was at New London and appears to have brought on a temporary insanity. Davenport seems to have had a generally successful ministry except for his four or five years of extremism. Thereafter he preached in Connecticut, New Jersey, New York and Virginia and died in 1757 at the age of forty. Three years before his death he wrote a letter from Stamford, Connecticut, to his brother-in-law, Stephen Williams of Long Meadows, which reflects a reasonable mind and a mellowed outlook and evidences hardly a tinge of the older fanaticism. At the time he was involved in the work of the College of New Jersey.[54]

Unfortunately, Davenport's return to sanity and a more irenic ministry did not cause his followers to give up their extremism. They merely tended to castigate him as one who had grown cold in spirit and fallen into a backslidden state. Moreover, Davenport's manner and speech and emphasis on physical agitation were to be characteristic of many preachers for some time to come. Trumbull comments:

> With his unnatural and violent agitations of the body, he united

[53] Prince, Christian History, II (1744), 236-39; Tracy, pp. 249-52.

[54] Letter on deposit at the Yale Library.

> a strange singing tone which mightily tended to raise the feelings of weak and undiscerning people, and consequently to heighten the confusion among the passionate of his hearers. This odd, disagreeable tuning of the voice, in exercises of demotion, was caught by the zealous exhorters, and became a characteristic of the separate preachers. The whole sect were distinguished by this sanctimonious tone. It was Mr. Davenport's manner, when a number had cried out, and there had been great agitations of body, to pronounce them tokens of divine favour; and what was still worse, he would declare those persons who were the subjects of those outcries and agitations, to be converted; or that they had come to Christ; which were gross and dangerous errors.[55]

Emotionalism, following the example of Davenport and Tennent and to a lesser degree the example of Whitefield became the hallmark of the left wing element of the revival. Many of this radical group of itinerants were lay exhorters whose very names have almost passed from the pages of history. A few, such as Lawyer Elisha Paine, were better known and made a considerable impact on their times. These are discussed more at length subsequently.

Moderate Itinerants

To balance out the account, it may prove useful to observe that other itinerants of a more moderate sort were also moving back and forth across Connecticut and in neighboring colonies. As the excitement of the revival mounted in 1741 and early 1742, many who were college graduates and ordained and settled ministers felt led to do their bit in "helping along the work of God." While they may have gone on numerous preaching missions, normally they were invited to preach in the places where they went. And most of them slowed down the rate of their itinerations or ceased them

[55] Trumbull, II, 161.

altogether after the law against itinerancy was enacted in 1742. Some of them did not need a law to encourage them to stay home. When they returned home from preaching missions they discovered that their extramural successes had been a little too costly. In absence of their pastors congregations had had opportunity to make comparisons that were often unfavorable to the settled minister. Rumors of separation were heard. When the shepherds came home their flocks began to wander.

The tendency of some of these itinerants to evidence religious concern dates back to college days. At Yale there seems to have been a group similar to the "Holy Club" at Oxford of which the Wesleys were members. David Ferris, a fanatical Quaker from New Milford, Connecticut, led the group; and James Davenport, Timothy Allen, Benjamin Pomeroy and Eleazar Wheelock were among the members.[56] On graduation from Yale in 1733, Pomeroy was called to be pastor of the Hebron church. When the Awakening began he became a firm adherent of it. His itinerancy on behalf of the revival was to cost him dearly. As already noted, he was accused of disorderly conduct along with James Davenport before the General Assembly in June of 1742 but was acquitted. The following year he was again summoned before the Assembly, this time to answer charges of violating the itinerancy law of 1742; he was found guilty and fined. In 1744 he was heavily fined for statements made against the itinerancy law and subsequently was deprived of his salary for seven years, after which time it was restored.[57]

[56] Boardman, p. 43.

[57] Dexter, Biographical Sketches, I, 485-88; J. R. Cole, History of Tolland County, Connecticut (New York: W. W. Preston & Co., 1888), pp. 351-52.

His people stood by him, however, supporting him with their gifts. Trumbull was much impressed with the abilities of Pomeroy:

> His language was good, and he might be reckoned among the best preachers of his day. He could set the terrors of the Lord in awful array before sinners . . . With equal advantage, he could represent the wonders of Christ's love, his glory, the sufficiency of his righteousness, and the blessedness of all who would be reconciled unto God through him.[58]

A second member of the Yale "Holy Club" was to become one of the most distinguished men of early America. Eleazar Wheelock graduated from Yale in 1733 and was called to minister at the North Parish of Lebanon. He enjoyed a revival in his community contemporary with that of Northampton in 1734 and 1735. When the Great Awakening proper broke out five years later, Wheelock gave himself unstintingly to its promotion. Benjamin Trumbull, who knew Wheelock and other preachers of the Awakening, said of him,

> . . . President Wheelock, was a gentleman of a comely figure, of a mild and winning aspect; his voice smooth and harmonious, the best, by far, that I ever heard. He had the entire command of it. His gesture was natural, but not redundant. His preaching and addresses were close and pungent, and yet winning, beyond almost all comparison, so that his audience would be melted even into tears, before they were aware of it.[59]

Jonathan Edwards had a high regard for Wheelock as is clear from his correspondence. For instance, on June 9, 1741, he wrote to Wheelock, ". . . your labors have been much more remarkably blessed than mine. . ." In the same letter Edwards requested that Wheelock and Pomeroy (Wheelock's brother-in-law) come to Massachusetts to help in the work there and

[58] Trumbull, II, 157.

[59] Trumbull, II, 158.

encouraged them also to go to his father's parish at East Windsor.[60] After Wheelock fulfilled the assignment at East Windsor, Timothy Edwards on August 26, 1741, sent a glowing report to Wheelock of the continuing revival there after the ministry of the latter. Over seventy conversions had occurred in five or six weeks.[61]

Wheelock made numerous preaching tours to fan the flames of revival. One of the longest was twenty-five days in duration, ending on November 16, 1741. At that time he preached more than forty sermons in Connecticut, Rhode Island and Massachusetts. A similar effort took place in June of 1742 in towns between Lebanon and New Haven and as far west as Stratford.[62] How many other evangelistic campaigns he launched is not certain. Distant towns called for his help and he preached wherever he was invited. With all his fervency and zeal, Wheelock was discreet and wise and he set himself against the fanaticism of the separatists and of lay exhorters, who were disturbing the order of the churches. He had troubles with both the right and left--the church and state party and the separatists. Churches of many of the former were closed to him. Indication of this fact is seen in the June 9, 1741 letter written to him by Edwards and noted above: "Other Ministers, I have heard, have shut up their pulpits against you: but here I engage you shall find one open. May God send you hither with the like blessing as he has sent you to some other places." In June, 1742,

[60] William Allen (ed.), "Memoir of Rev. Eleazar Wheelock, D. D.," American Quarterly Register, X (1837), 11.

[61] Allen, p. 12.

[62] Allen, p. 16.

he was refused permission to preach at Yale.[63] The left also attacked him. In 1744 a separatist of Plainfield wrote him:

> Yet all this never went so near my soul, as it does to hear and see the blessed work and ways of the glorious God called errors and delusions of the devil. Pray, Sir, let me deal plainly now, and don't be angry: do you think you are out of danger of committing the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost? It would not surprise me much to hear, that God had opened the flood-gates of his wrath and let out the horrors of conscience on you, and many more of your party who deny the truth, so that you should die in as great despair as Judas or Spira did.[64]

It seems that Wheelock had equated visions, revelations and the like at Voluntown with devices of Satan, hence this attack.

Another of the promoters of the Great Awakening who itinerated extensively in his preaching ministry was Joseph Bellamy. Graduating from Yale in 1735 at the age of sixteen, Bellamy became pastor three years later of the newly organized parish of Bethlehem and held that post for over fifty years. He was full of enthusiasm for the Great Awakening; and after preaching with fervor and success first to his own congregation, from 1742 on for several years he preached a part of the year in and around Connecticut. In 1768 he received an honorary D. D. degree from Aberdeen. By that time he had written several theological works and had trained a number of young men for the ministry in his home, which had become a sort of backwoods seminary. In his early years he was censorious of his brethren and was carried away with New Lightism in 1741, but he recovered from these extravagances, largely through the friendly counsel of Jonathan Edwards.[65]

[63] Allen, p. 16.

[64] Allen, p. 18.

[65] Dexter, Biographical Sketches, I, 523-29.

Trumbull, who knew him, observed:

> Dr. Bellamy, was a large and well built man, of a commanding appearance; had a smooth, strong voice, and could fill the largest house without any unnatural elevation. He possessed a truly great mind, generally preached without notes, had some great point of doctrine commonly to establish, and would keep close to his point until he had sufficiently illustrated it; then, in an ingenious, close, and pungent manner, he would make the application. . . . His pulpit talents exceeded all his other gifts. It is difficult for any man, who never heard him, to form a just idea of the force and beauty of his preaching.[66]

Jonathan Parsons of Lyme also stumped hard for the revival in eastern Connecticut and in Massachusetts. A 1729 graduate of Yale, he was ordained pastor of the Lyme church shortly thereafter. In 1740 he became an enthusiastic supporter of the revival and began to travel on its behalf. An example of the kind of attack that itinerants might expect was published in Boston in 1743. In a piece entitled "Mr. Parsons Corrected," a certain A. Z. scored Jonathan Parsons for a recent sermon preached in Boston and said he ought to stay home and teach his Indians. The attack is scurrilous and reveals the littleness of the attacker.[67] Unfortunately for Parsons a strong minority of his congregation also opposed his revival measures, and he resigned his church in 1745. Visiting Newburyport, Massachusetts subsequently, he accepted the pastorate of a congregation of separatists there organized as a Presbyterian church. Whitefield died in Parsons' home in 1770 and was buried under his pulpit. Parsons was buried beside him in 1776.

Benajah Case, a Yale graduate of 1733, identified himself with the

[66] Trumbull, II, 159.

[67] A. Z., Mr. Parsons Corrected (Boston: Rogers and Fowle, 1743).

New Light party during the Awakening. He was employed in 1742 to preach to a separate society in Milford and for this intrusion into Samuel Whittelsey's parish he was arrested and imprisoned for a short term. After preaching to the Indians in northwest Connecticut, he became pastor of the church in New Fairfield.[68]

After graduating from Yale in 1741 Samuel Buell obtained a license to preach and hit the evangelistic trail. In October he preached his way through almost every parish from Fairfield, Connecticut, to Northampton, Massachusetts. At the latter he spent two or three weeks. Jonathan Edwards was very much impressed with the young preacher's ministry and felt exceedingly unprofitable by comparison. In December he advised Thomas Prince in Boston that "there were very extraordinary effects of Mr. Buell's labours; the people were exceedingly moved, crying out in great numbers in the meeting house, and great part of the congregation commonly staying in the house of God for hours after the public service."[69] Moving on to Boston, Buell was still preaching with great effect there in April, 1742.[70]

Another of the better known itinerants was Timothy Allen, Jr. One of the group under the influence of David Ferris at Yale, he carried this zeal into his first pastorate at West Haven. During the Awakening he forcefully supported the revival and in 1742 was arraigned before the

[68] Dexter, Biographical Sketches, I, 475-76.

[69] Edwin S. Gaustad, The Great Awakening in New England (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1965; orig. pub., 1957), p. 44.

[70] Gaustad, p. 55.

county consociation for some of his New Light views and dismissed from his pastorate. This official action sent him temporarily into radical revival activities. He went to New London and began to preach in private homes. During the summer he took charge of a New Light academy in New London for educating young men for the ministry. Known as the Shepherd's Tent, this school was forced out of Connecticut by an act of the General Assembly of October, 1742. Allen was involved with Davenport in the bonfire episode of March, 1743. After ministry on Long Island, Allen later reentered the regular Congregational ministry of Connecticut and in 1757 answered a call to pastor the church at Ashford in Windham County.[71]

Other itinerants who were not mere lay exhorters thrown up by the excitement and who were graduates of Yale included Jedidiah Mills of Ripton, Philemon Robbins of Branford and John Graham of Southbury. Jonathan Edwards, another Yale man from farther north in the Connecticut Valley, preached up and down the region.[72] His most famous sermon in Connecticut was preached at Enfield, July 8, 1741. Further comment on Edwards' activity in Connecticut appears below.

Although the government and church of Connecticut were determined to stop itinerancy they could never effectively do so. Anyone who received a proper invitation to preach in another parish could do so within the provisions of the law. Some parishes determined to destroy the operation of the law. A good example of what could happen in the more radical

[71] Dexter, Biographical Sketches, I, 551-55.

[72] Perry Miller, Jonathan Edwards (New York: William Sloane Associates, Inc., 1949), p. 145.

parishes is provided by action of the Second Society of Coventry. It voted on June 21, 1742 to invite any of the following to preach among them, and the head of any family was permitted to ask any of them: Mr. Meacham, Mr. Solomon Williams, Mr. Wheelock, Mr. Bellamy, Mr. Mills, Mr. Lockwood, Mr. Case, Mr. Judd, Mr. Buell, Mr. Davenport, Mr. Marsh, Mr. Croswell, Mr. Fish, Mr. Edwards, Mr. Mosely, Mr. Whitefield, Mr. Lord of Norwich, Mr. Lord of Preston, Mr. White, Mr. Steel and Gilbert Tennent.[73] Probably it is best not to make any inferences from this list. Since significant names are missing, it is apparently not designed to be a complete roster of itinerants nor of the supporters of the revival. Moreover, it is not very safe to speculate on why some of the names of known revivalists are missing. Exactly how many followed in the itinerating swath that Whitefield cut across Connecticut is not known, but certainly the company was numerous.

[73] Cole, p. 399.

CHAPTER V

FLOOD TIDE AND BEGINNINGS OF CONTROVERSY

In 1741 the religious excitement that had been mounting in New England reached flood tide. Contemporaries of this revival movement described it as a "great and general awakening," and so it was. Effects to circumscribe the Awakening by dubbing it a "lower-class uprising," "a revolt of the back country," or a "phenomenon confined to the cities and the settled areas of the East" are all doomed to failure in the light of research of others or of the writer.

Adherents of the Awakening certainly were not confined to one social class. As will become clear from subsequent discussion, members of all classes are found both among supporters and opponents of the Great Awakening. Studies show that from an economic standpoint the new converts in the Franklin and Norwich parishes in Windham County represented a cross section of the population.[1] Probably this was also true to a large degree of other parishes across the colony. If the conclusion reached in a subsequent chapter to the effect that the separatists constituted something of a cross section of the society in areas where they formed churches, the converts of the Awakening generally probably ranged over the whole social spectrum. A majority of the more moderate converts, possibly those slightly higher on the social register than the separatists, did not secede from their home Churches. The Congregational ministers of Connecticut, all

[1] Ellen D. Larned, History of Windham County, Connecticut (Worcester, Mass.: Published by the Author, 1874-80), I, 397.

college graduates (most from Yale) and members of the upper classes, were almost evenly split on the revival. Sklar observes that of the 119 Congregational ministers installed in Connecticut churches in January of 1741, information about their attitude toward the Great Awakening is available for ninety. Forty-three supported it and forty-seven opposed it.[2] The Yale student body of 1741 (sons of the better families of the colony) seems to have been predominantly in favor of the revival.

This bifurcation of the established clergy into opposing camps was one of the unfortunate effects of the Great Awakening, not only in Connecticut but in other colonies as well. It brought about a wrangling previously unknown in the American church and weakened the position of the church in society. Those favoring the revival, with its emphasis on an instantaneous or sudden conversion experience and attendant emotional and mystical features, became known as "New Lights" because in their ministry they sought to get their congregations "new-lighted" by the "Spirit of God." Those opposing the revival were suspicious of the emotionalism of the movement and stressed an intellectual approach to Christianity with a more quiet entrance into the Kingdom of God; therefore they were called "Old Lights." Laymen of the colony also divided into opposing camps. The Anglicans and Baptists of New England, predominantly at opposite ends of the social scale in 1741, were both generally opposed to the Awakening.

Just as adherents of the Awakening were not confined to one social

[2] Robert Sklar, "The Great Awakening and Colonial Politics," Connecticut Historical Society Bulletin, 28 (July, 1963), 84.

class, so they were also not confined to one area of Connecticut. Opponents and supporters of the revival among the Congregational clergy were distributed all over the colony; it may be presumed that to a large degree their parishoners followed them in their views. Great sentiment for the revival could be found in such port towns as New London or New Haven, in interior towns such as Norwich or Windham, in frontier towns such as Bethlehem, and in towns of New London County in the east and Fairfield County in the west. Thus there was no geographical localization of the phenomenon in Connecticut. According to Bushman, the Great Awakening covered all of Connecticut. There were "no dead spots" where the Awakening did not reach.[3] A study of each of the individual churches of the colony seems to confirm this assertion, but there is little evidence that there was much revival excitement in the new settlements of the northwestern part of the colony. Probably the population there was too sparse to call forth the efforts of itinerants or lay exhorters. While the revival covered all of Connecticut, its itensity was probably greater in the east than the west and on the coast and on large rivers than inland.

In confirmation of this conclusion on the estent of the Awakening, Benjamin Trumbull, eminent historian of Connecticut, asserts:

> In 1740, there began a very great and general concern among the people, for the salvation of their souls. . . . It extended to old and young. . . . The children of God received the fresh anointings of the Spirit. . . . This awakening reached the large towns and cities. . . . as well as the country towns and villages . . . . Negroes and Indians, on whom before no impression could

[3] See the unpublished dissertation (Harvard, 1960) by Richard L. Bushman, "Government and Society in Connecticut, 1690-1760," p. 267.

be made, were heard with others, making the great enquiry.[4]

Speaking of the revival in broader terms, Gaustad concluded:

> The Awakening was "Great" because it was general: none escaped its influence or avoided its controversy. In both coastal and frontier areas, within cities and rural communities, in churches and in open fields, people gathered to hear an earnest evangelistic gospel, be it preached by their own minister, a neighboring pastor, a trespassing itinerant, or an exhorter. . . . There is . . . abundant evidence that this religious turmoil in New England was in fact "great and general," that it knew no boundaries, social or geographical, that it was both urban and rural, and that it reached both lower and upper classes. The geographical non-particularity of the Great Awakening is readily established. . ."[5]

Before continuing the story of the Great Awakening in Connecticut, it may prove useful to put the movement in its North Atlantic context. Wright observes, "The Great Awakening was a reaction against the formalism of an accepted orthodoxy, and was the American counterpart of that religious unrest which produced Pietism in Germany and Methodism in England."[6] Perry Miller may be quoted in the same vein:

> The mysterious phenomenon known in Germany as Pietism, in England as evangelicalism and Methodism, in America as the Great Awakening, presents everywhere a curious uniformity, as though each people had been searching for the same thing, and suddenly, in the heyday of the Enlightenment, found it.[7]

Not only is there an interesting similarity in these movements, there is also a real historical connection between them. After a disillusioning

[4] Benjamin Trumbull, A Complete History of Connecticut (New Haven: Maltby, Goldsmith & Co., 1818), II, 143-44.

[5] Edwin S. Gaustad, The Great Awakening in New England (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1965; orig. pub., 1957), pp. 42-3.

[6] Conrad Wright, Beginnings of Unitarianism in America (Boston: Star King Press, 1955), p. 30.

[7] Perry Miller, Jonathan Edwards (New York: William Sloane Associates, Inc., 1949), p. 133.

period of missionary effort in Georgia, the Wesleys were led to a conversion experience by Moravian missionaries on shipboard on the way home and became founders of the Methodist movement. Whitefield, as a close friend of the Wesleys, came under their influence and accepted many of their views. He differed, however, in steadfastly maintaining a Calvinistic theology in the face of Wesleyan Arminianism.

Why the Great Awakening

Putting the American Great Awakening into its North Atlantic context leads naturally into a discussion of why the Great Awakening came to New England in general and Connecticut in particular. It may be argued that to a large degree the Awakening was a protest against the departure of eighteenth century Congregationalism from its earlier ideals. The dying out of an earlier zeal, diminishing emphasis on the necessity of a conscious conversion experience, the reduction of standards for church membership, growing formality in church services and the "essay-like" features of New England preaching were characteristics of the New England church similar to developments increasingly bemoaned among pietists in Germany in their Lutheran churches and Methodists in England among their Anglican brethren. Whitefield was concerned about many of these things in his North American preaching. When the itinerants and separatists who followed him began their evangelistic activities, they made capital of these matters. As noted in a later chapter, separatists often gave one or more of these points as reasons for separating from their churches and forming new congregations.

The way for the coming of the revival had been prepared by a remaining

orthodoxy in New England that preached the sovereignty of God, the infallibility of the Bible, the certainty of judgment, and the necessity of faith in Christ for forgiveness of sin. Without a general acceptance of these doctrines the Great Awakening could not have come as it did. With this belief all that was needed was an effective calling back of the populace to a personal acceptance of these preachments and a life lived on the basis of them.

As already noted, the way for the coming of the Great Awakening had also been prepared by the revivals in the Middle Colonies and the Edwardean revivals in New England. From these the faithful had concluded that God was not through with New England and that their community might yet enjoy a spiritual awakening of its own. Thus a desire for revival was created in many places.

Some have tried to explain either the Edwardean revival or the Great Awakening as arising out of fear or concern associated with great popular distress. But this does not seem to have been the case. The great earthquake of October 29, 1727, had produced a temporary interest in religion, but nothing very deep or abiding. Was the case different with the diphtheria epidemic in 1735-39 which carried off some 5,000 New England children and destroyed almost all the youth in some towns?[8] Gaustad thinks not and cogently observes:

> . . . in Connecticut and Massachusetts, the severity of the epidemic in any given area bears no observable relation to the intensity of the revival in that area, either before or after Whitefield; in New Hampshire the epidemic was all over by 1736, making difficult an

[8] Ernest Caulfield, "Common Diseases of Colonial Children," Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, XXXV (1942-46), 15-16.

explanation of the five-year lapse between its terminus and the beginning of the Great Awakening in the Kingston-Hampton Falls area; and finally, while the epidemic was from four to five times as severe in New Hampshire and Maine as in Connecticut and Massachusetts, it was in the latter areas that the revival was most pervasive. In the preface to Edward's [sic.] report of the revivals Drs. Watts and Guyse of London wrote:

> 'Tis worthy of our Observation, that this great and surprizing Work does not seem to have taken its Rise from any sudden and distressing Calamity or publick Terror that might universally impress the Minds of a People: Here was no Storm, no Earthquake, no Inundation of Water, no Desolation by Fire, no Pestilence or any other sweeping Distemper, nor any cruel Invasion by their Indian Neighbours, that might force the Inhabitants into a serious Thoughtfulness, and a religious Temper by the Fears of approaching Death and Judgment.[9]

In a somewhat monistic explanation, Morgan believed that the Great Awakening arose simply from a new method of preaching a kind of hell-fire sermon. He says that hell-fire preaching was found to have as much effect as earthquakes and other calamities.[10] Morgan classifies Jonathan Edwards as among the original exponents of this method. Morgan has a point but it should not be overdone. As already noted, the series of sermons that touched off the revival in Northampton was on justification by faith, and it was preceded by a series on the blessings of God and His love. Presumably hell-fire preaching involved emotionalism, but Edwards was no special advocate of emotional preaching. In fact, when he delivered his famous sermon on "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" at Enfield, Connecticut, he kept his eyes fixed on the bell-rope. When moanings and cryings broke out he sought to stop the emotional expression.[11] It has

[9] Gaustad, pp. 20-21.

[10] Edmund S. Morgan, The Gentle Puritan (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), p. 23.

[11] Miller, p. 145.

also been observed that Whitefield did not commonly preach hell-fire sermons. The sermon he preached with such effectiveness to Jonathan Edwards' congregation at Northampton on October 17, 1740, was on "the consolations and privileges of saints, and the plentiful effusion of the Spirit upon believers."[12] While Davenport and Tennent did preach hell-fire sermons, certainly many of the other most effective pastors and itinerants of the period of the Great Awakening did not. The truth is that a variety of approaches was used by promoters of the Awakening.

To a significant degree the Great Awakening owed its success in New England to George Whitefield. As Winslow commented, "Without George Whitefield or his like, the sudden phenomenon of 1740-41 might never have come to pass."[13] He was well received by almost all elements of society, from the governors of Massachusetts and Connecticut to the humblest of common citizens. Everywhere the crowds hung on his words, and everywhere the subject of religion became paramount in conversation. But it is important to note that the Great Awakening, at least in the sense of large numbers of conversions, did not begin with Whitefield. With few exceptions the evangelist's message did not eventuate in professions of faith while he was in town. This was to be expected because he seldom remained in one place more than a few hours, not long enough to drive home his message to the point of conversion of his hearers or to give them time to act on what he had said. Significantly, Winslow observes,

[12] George Whitefield's Journals (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1960), p. 476.

[13] Ola E. Winslow, Jonathan Edwards (New York: Macmillan Co., 1940), p. 176.

> While the holiday was on, nothing mattered but to make sure of heaven; but with shops reopened and life going on as usual, men wondered at their own fears and postponed repentance. The nature of Whitefield's extraordinary talents make this inevitable. His power was of the moment, and the moment only.[14]

Nathan Cole, who heard Whitefield at Middletown, did not come to an experience of conversion until about a year later.[15] Samuel Hopkins at Yale said simply, "he was much interested in the man, and much impressed by his solemn warnings."[16] The records of Connecticut churches do not show any significant increase in professions of faith during the last quarter of 1740. In fact, as will be noted on the chart provided in Chapter VII, professions during 1740 were actually down in many instances from 1739. Nor do the early months of 1741 show the full effects of Whitefield's ministry. It is not until April or May that the high tide of the revival rolled in. Perhaps an entry made by Jared Ingersoll of Yale in his Historical Account under the date October 20, 1740, is significant. He spoke of Whitefield as a man "by whose preaching many are seemingly brought under strong conviction of their sin and misery. . ."[17] In time the process of conviction would culminate in conversion.

While one must be careful not to make geographical or climatic conditions causative, he can sometimes see in them a conditional effect. The

[14] Winslow, p. 179.

[15] Nathan Cole, "Spiritual Travels," unpublished manuscript on file at the Connecticut Historical Society. He dates his conversion to October, 1741.

[16] Joseph Belcher, George Whitefield (New York: American Tract Society, 1857), p. 185.

[17] Jared Ingersoll, "An Historical Account of Some Affairs Relating to the Church, Especially in Connecticut," unpublished manuscript on file in the Library of Congress, dated 1740, but covers events of years immediately following.

terrible winter of 1740-41 should not be ignored as a factor in the coming of the Great Awakening. Parkes noted,

> That winter was the longest New England could remember. In January they could pitch a tent on the Charles River for the entertainment of travelers. . . in March people could ride out every day from Stratford on to Long Island. . . sheep and cattle died everywhere by hundreds. . . . The roads were all but impassible, and Boston was threatened with famine.[18]

Movement of people was at a minimum during those cold months; they had time to think and to talk about what they had heard from Whitefield's own lips or what had been reported to them. Parkes commented further, ". . . vague and magnified reports of Whitefield's preaching set them brooding amid the winter isolation of the apparent approach of Christ's kingdom."[19]

But it was not remembrances of Whitefield's words alone that melted the ice of spiritual indifference during New England's cold winter.

> The revival came partly because after he had gone those New England ministers who took their duties seriously were so heartened by his success that they rammed home the gospel of hellfire and conversion with a completely new ardor, and partly because Whitefield sent up to Boston his friend Gilbert Tennent. . . . When spring came the revival blazed up all over New England. In Boston Tennent's preaching ate away the will to resist and thousands of souls became convinced of sin. Scattered villages felt the power of God almost independently of outside influence. . . . Through the summer of 1741 the fever grew hotter and hotter; in the fall it reached its maximum; but in the spring of 1742 it was still spreading to fresh parishes.[20]

[18] Henry B. Parkes, Jonathan Edwards (New York: Monton, Balch & Co., 1930), p. 147. Miss Caulkins reported that at one spot in Lyme parties assembled to drink punch made of ice that lay among the ledges as late as July 10; Frances M. Caulkins, History of New London, Connecticut (New London: H. D. Utley, 1895), p. 411.

[19] Parkes, p. 147.

[20] Parkes, pp. 146-47.

Connecticut men of the 1740s would probably have accepted all of these observations as to why the Great Awakening came when it did, but to them it was preeminently a work of God which had occurred because of the work of His Spirit in the hearts of men. Such was the conclusion of Whitefield repeatedly in passages in his Journal. The same position was taken by twelve ministers of the eastern part of Connecticut in a testimonial appearing in Prince's Christian History on August 20, 1743,[21] and by ten ministers of Fairfield County, whose testimonial Prince offered in his history November 24, 1744.[22] A generation later separatists meeting at Killingly in 1781 also attributed the work to God but included among God's chief instruments, "Whitefield, Tennants, Belamy, Pomeroy, Wheelock, Edwards, Buell, Croswell, Jewit, Lord, Davenport, Finlay."[23]

The contemporary observer, enjoying a perspective that comes with passage of time, would also add social disorganization as a reason for the coming of the Awakening. As is noted elsewhere in this study, it is precisely in those areas where most rapid growth was taking place that the revival was most intense. Eastern Connecticut is a case in point. Not only were commercial towns like New London and Norwich experiencing considerable population expansion but the more rural areas of Windham County to the north were going through a similar development. Status quo is hard to maintain in the midst of vibrant growth. Connecticut

[21] Thomas Prince, Jr., The Christian History, I (1743), 195-97.

[22] Prince, Christian History, II (1744), 311-12.

[23] An Historical Narrative and Declaration. . . of Strict Congregational Churches Convened by Delegation at Killingly, September 19, 1781, (Providence: Bennett Wheeler, 1781), p. 4.

towns learned that truth as disputes constantly erupted between factions trying to promote their interests. Social disorganization of another sort came with the Anglican challenge to the Congregational establishment. The defection at Yale in 1722 had left its mark on Connecticut; the question of the validity of Congregational ordination rankled in the minds of an increasing number of the established clergy and the number of Anglican preaching points continued to multiply in the colony. As to the significance of social disorganization for the coming of the Awakening, Ver Steeg observes: "In such a period of transition, when theological tenets formerly accepted are subject to critical analysis and when religious organizations must adjust to new conditions, the new, the fresh, the experimental is more likely to find a hospitable reception."[24]

Along with social disorganization went a rise in the individualistic spirit. Again, in eastern Connecticut this spirit was pronounced; nowhere was it greater than in Windham County, as is subsequently noted. And in this county almost every community was swept by the revival spirit. While a certain Calvinistic content pervaded the preaching of the Awakening, there was frequent emphasis on a gospel and a salvation for all. Ver Steeg notes: "Individualistic spirit and egalitarianism are . . . vague concepts, but the general message of the Awakening that man could control his destiny appealed to the common man."[25]

[24] Clarence L. Ver Steeg, The Formative Years 1607-1763 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), p. 223.

[25] Ver Steeg, p. 224.

Height of the Awakening in Connecticut

New Haven. When the revival began in Connecticut is hard to say. It is doubtful, however, whether any place in the colony experienced a very dramatic change before February, 1741. David Brainerd reported that a "general awaking" spread itself over the college in late February.[26] This was even before the coming of Gilbert Tennent in March, when he preached seventeen times in New Haven, including three times at the college hall.

With the coming of Tennent, Samuel Hopkins, then a student, observed "many professors of religion received conviction, that they were not real Christians. . ." and "The members of college appeared to be universally awakened."[27] Hopkins went on to describe the religious commotion at the college in those days. Some with great zeal went around to the rooms of others to speak to them about their eternal welfare. These included David Brainerd, Samuel Buell (later settled at East Hampton, Long Island) and David Youngs (later settled at Brookhaven, Long Island). As to his own experience, Hopkins observed that he was not converted before coming to college. Though admitted to communion at his home church about two years earlier, he had not been questioned on the point of conversion. David Brainerd came to converse with him on the subject. Some inkling of the kind of religious experiences men were having in the excitement of the Awakening is obtained from Hopkins' own testimony:

[26] Jonathan Edwards, An Account of the Life of the Late Reverend Mr. David Brainerd (Edinburgh: William Gray, 1765), p. 17.

[27] Chauncey Goodrich, "Narrative of Revivals of Religion in Yale," American Quarterly Register, X (1838), 291.

> At length, as I was in my closet one evening, while meditating in my devotions, a new and wonderful scene opened to my view. I had a sense of the being and presence of God, as I never had before; it being more of a reality, and more affecting and glorious, than I had ever before perceived. And the character of Jesus Christ the Mediator came into view, and appeared such a reality and so glorious, and the way of salvation by him so wise, important and desirable, that I was astonished at myself, that I had never seen these things before, which were so plain, pleasing and desirable. I longed to have all see and know these things as they now appeared to me. I was greatly affected in my view of my own depravity, the sinfulness, odiousness and guilt of my character; and tears flowed in great plenty.[28]

Yale was destined to be a focal point of interest for numerous other revivalists in subsequent months. Among those who came was Ebenezer Pemberton, pastor of the Presbyterian church in New York City, who preached in the college hall on April 19. A friend of Whitefield and a Harvard graduate with a good reputation, he preached on "The Knowledge of Christ Recommended" and took as his text First Corinthians 2:2. Pemberton asserted that the only kind of knowledge worth having was that which came from conviction of sin and a regenerate heart.[29] His effect on the students was great. This sermon is particularly interesting because when published it had appended a list of 100 subscribers, most of whom were students. Included in the list were all the members of the senior and sophomore classes and all but three from the other classes.[30] Those who followed Pemberton in preaching at New Haven included Joseph Bellamy of Bethlehem, Jedidiah Mills of Ripton, Jonathan Parsons of Lyme, John Graham of

[28] Quoted in Goodrich, pp. 291-92.

[29] Ebenezer Pemberton, The Knowledge of Christ Recommended, in a Sermon Preached in the Public Hall at Yale College in New Haven . . . (New London: T. Green, 1741).

[30] Franklin B. Dexter, Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale College, 1701-1745 (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1885), I, 662.

Southbury and others.

The refreshing waters of revival flowed smoothly enough in New Haven during the early months of 1741. But they became more turbulent with the coming of Tennent and began to churn with destructive force when Davenport came in the fall just before commencement at Yale. Under the influence of exciting preaching the students became increasingly restless. Not only were they dissatisfied with the sermons of Rev. Joseph Noyes in the New Haven church, but they also began to question the spiritual standing of college personnel. This led to the commencement day pronouncement by the Yale trustees against insubordination, as already noted.

To add to the excitement, Jonathan Edwards came down from Northampton to deliver the commencement sermon on September 9. Preaching from John 4:1, he took as his subject "The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God." Although rebuking such errors of the New Lights as spiritual pride, the judgment of others, and some extremes of emotionalism, he generally supported the awakening then going on. Quickly printed, his sermon became the rallying point for friends of the revival--the New Lights.

Just as the forces of the New Lights began to coalesce, so did those of the Old Lights--opponents of the Awakening. Thomas Clap had been inducted as rector of Yale on April 2, 1740, a half year before Whitefield hit Connecticut. A domineering individual, he had come to Yale from the ministry of Windham with a reputation as a champion of orthodoxy. Clap apparently received Whitefield well in October, had him speak to the college students and invited him to dinner. Clap later granted the use of the college hall to itinerants, but with the coming of Tennent he underwent

a noticeable change in attitude toward the revival. The emotionalism of Tennent and his condemnation of the ministry were too much for the stalwart conservative. The activities of James Davenport confirmed Clap in his opposition to the Awakening.[31] The Rector was determined to keep the lid on the student body; and when it was reported to him that David Brainerd, a junior and an ardent New Light, had attended a separate meeting, had said that Tutor Chauncy Whittelsey had no more saving grace than a chair and had also uttered unbecoming statements about the Rector, Clap expelled him on November 28. Brainerd went off to study with Jedidiah Mills of Ripton to fit himself for the work of the ministry.[32] By April, 1742, other students opposing Clap had either withdrawn from the college to go home or to take to the road as itinerant preachers.[33] The Anglicans, too, were upset by disorders of the time. Theophilus Morris, a New Haven missionary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, who was especially disturbed about the itinerant preachers appearing in town, wrote to the Society on May 4, 1742, that they were "furious preachers that Whitefield had set a madding."[34]

Meanwhile conservatives in New Haven outside the college were gathering forces. In May of 1741 the New Haven County Association of Ministers had passed a resolution condemning itinerant preaching.[35] As

[31] Louis L. Tucker, Puritan Protagonist (Chapel Hill, N. C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1962), p. 124.

[32] Edwards, Life of Brainerd, p. 21.

[33] Dexter, I, 698.

[34] Tucker, p. 119.

[35] Morgan, p. 31.

observed in the last chapter, a resolution signed by ministers in the area was sent up to the General Assembly in the fall, and it was successful in producing the anti-itinerancy law of May, 1742. Joseph Noyes of the New Haven Church and Isaac Stiles of the North Haven church were key figures in the Old Light reaction. Stiles was an Old Light, even though quite fervent in his preaching. Apparently he felt that a very large amount of erudition was required along with a conversion experience in order to make one a good minister.[36] Stiles delivered the election sermon of 1742 in which he called on civil authority to take action against the separatists who were "subversive of Peace, Discipline and Government" and who had broken the "Laws of God."[37]

Some idea of what it was like to attend Yale during the first half of 1742 may be gained from the diary of John Cleveland of Canterbury. The diary runs from January 15 to May 11, 1742. The boys at Yale prayed individually and in small groups in their rooms, joined in the singing of hymns, discussed religion in the evenings and attended local revival meetings. For example, on January 15, Cleveland reported that after evening prayers in the hall two of his friends had gone off to pray in one of their rooms. Cleveland brought a friend to his room, and after they had sung a hymn five more of the boys came along to his room. Following an informal devotional exercise, the five left and Cleveland and his friend continued to talk about religion for a while. Periodic discussions occurred

[36] Morgan, pp. 26-7.

[37] Ezra Stiles, A Prospect of the City of Jerusalem . . . (New London, Conn.: T. Green, 1742), see especially pp. 46-58.

among the students on whether the revival work abroad in the land were of the devil or of God. A particularly heated argument on this subject took place on January 25. On February 1, Rector Clap called the students together to deal with the religious excitement plaguing the college and appeared to Cleveland to classify New Lights as Quakers and said among other things, "It would not do for the colony to bring up scholars against the religion of the colony." On February 5, Clap fined one of the students five shillings for speaking the truth in the hall, and according to Cleveland, "the truth was that he staid at home because of the coldness of the air and of the preacher." On the last day of February Cleveland attended a separate meeting at which Joseph Bellamy preached. The next day he heard Bellamy again; and that night after prayers in the hall the seniors held a meeting in which one of their number "was filled very full by the Spirit of God." Day after day the excitement continued. Presumably the students were attending lectures and studying, but Cleveland chose to talk about things of the Spirit. Finally he went home to Canterbury on April 2 for vacation and attended his share of separate meetings while in Eastern Connecticut.[38]

In commenting later on the Great Awakening, Jonathan Edwards said, "It was for a time very great and general at New Haven."[39] He would have been referring to the summer of 1741. The records of the New Haven church do not bear out his contention. Only twenty-eight joined the church in

[38] John Cleaveland, "Diary," photocopy of unpublished manuscript on deposit at the Yale University Library.

[39] Quoted in Goodrich, p. 292.

New Haven during 1741 and eight the following year.[40] Unfortunately, records of the North Haven church are not available. Either the New Haven records are not complete, or what seems more likely, most of the new converts did not join the church. As noted earlier, when Davenport arrived in the fall he had declared Joseph Noyes unconverted and had urged members of his congregation to separate from him. Many had done so, and on December 28, about three months after Davenport's visit, thirty-eight men drew up a memorial at the Society meeting to the effect that they found the preaching and conduct of Noyes in some measure unprofitable and differed with him in some points of faith and wished to be made a distinct society. On January 29 permission was granted the separatists by the county court to have meetings by themselves. This action must have created increased furor at Yale, where John Cleveland made special note of the grant on the day it was made.[41] Many years of debate and contention were to elapse, however, before the issues of separation were to be resolved. The story is told in outline in Chapter VIII.

An illustration of how the issues of the Awakening divided society at large and families in particular is provided by the leadership of the separatist movement in New Haven. One of the chief seceders was James Pierpont, son of the former New Haven pastor of the same name. He entertained Whitefield in his home when the evangelist came through in 1740 and would do so again. The younger Pierpont had sisters who had married

[40] Franklin B. Dexter, Historical Catalogue of the Members of the First Church of Christ in New Haven, Connecticut, A. D. 1639-1914 (New Haven: Published by the Author, 1914), pp. 69-88.

[41] Cleveland "Diary," entry for January 29, 1742.

Jonathan Edwards and Joseph Noyes. Thus, one of the leading radicals in the colony was brother-in-law both to one of the leading Old Lights and the most distinguished moderate New Light of New England.

New London. Apparently the Great Awakening came to New London through the instrumentality of Gilbert Tennent, who preached there on March 30 and 31. From that time on meetings became more frequent, with neighboring clergymen assisting each other in weekly lectures. Attendance was reported as high. An event of special significance occurred on May 19 when a large number of children assembled and short sermons were addressed to them. On this occasion the children were arranged according to size and age--the boys in one group and the girls in another.[42] During the first week in June a protracted meeting was held, in which Jedidiah Mills of the Ripton Parish in Derby and Nathaniel Eells of Stonington joined Eliphalet Adams of New London. Many conversions were reported.[43] Joshua Hempstead, a leading citizen of the town who was, among other accomplishments a justice of the peace and judge of probate, was caught up in the excitement with the rest of the townspeople. He wrote in his diary on June 6, 1741:

> Also there hath been the wonderfull work of God made Evident in the powerfull Convictions Conversion of Divers persons in an Extreordinary manner. . . this week hath been kept as a Sabbath most of it, & with the greatest Success Imaginable & beyond what is Rational to Conceive of it. . . Never any Such time here & Scarce any where Else.[44]

Unfortunately men would soon descend from this high spiritual plateau

[42] Caulkins, p. 449.

[43] Caulkins, p. 450.

[44] "Diary of Joshua Hempstead of New London, Connecticut," Proceedings of the New London County Historical Society, I (1901), 377.

into a valley of contention. Already on June 16 Mr. Adams felt compelled to seek outside help to reconcile the pro- and anti-revival parties in his church. He called in Jonathan Parsons of the first church in Lyme, but the latter was not too happy with his success.[45] Controversy increased with the arrival of Davenport and Allen later on. Fortunately separatism had a brief day in New London, but wrangling surrounding events of the period effectively brought a halt to the Awakening.[46]

Lyme. Preparation for the coming of the revival at Lyme was made by Jonathan Parsons of the First Congregational Church (west parish). Although Whitefield did not come through Lyme, reports of his activity elsewhere in Connecticut excited the Lyme people. After hearing Whitefield in New Haven, Parsons shed his prejudices concerning the revivalist. Then he went to Hartford to consider first hand the effects of Whitefield's ministry there and to determine whether this was the work of a false or a Holy Spirit. Subsequently he corresponded with individuals in Hartford and with Benjamin Colman in Boston regarding the revival there.

Furnished with a considerable amount of information about revivals in various places, Parsons on March 29, 1741, preached a sermon to right what he considered to be wrong impressions of Whitefield and the Awakening. Some of the observations made in the sermon included the conviction that bodily agitations are no necessary indication of the working of the Holy Spirit but they may be. People may be under spiritual conviction without

[45] Caulkins, p. 450.

[46] For discussion see previous treatment of James Davenport and discussion of the separatist movement in New London in Chapter VIII.

bodily agitation; but on the other hand, it is not right to claim a person was not converted because of some irregular enthusiastical acts. Every imprudent act should not be deemed a sufficient argument against the influence of the Spirit of God. He also asserted that one has reason to believe that a movement is the work of God if the course of life of a great number is turned to righteousness and concern for the things of Christ, a sense of sin, wrath of God and salvation in Christ.[47]

This March 29 sermon brought great religious concern and laid a foundation for the work of Tennent early the following month. Tennent heightened the interest and Parsons' parishoners wanted evening lectures, so he began preaching three times a week and also preached for Griswold in the second (east) parish. While he was there out-cries of people over their sinful condition occurred in the meetings and many testified of their conversion. By the end of April the young people generally had turned from their usual entertainments. Parsons delivered the election sermon May 14, at which time there was much physical manifestation. The knees of some knocked together and "several stout Men fell as tho' a Cannon had been discharg'd"; some young women were thrown into hysteric fits. After the sermon Parsons conversed with many of those in attendance for several hours. When he asked the reason for physical manifestations, they said, "for fear of judgment and sorrow for sins."[48]

Having made this kind of impact, Parsons now received invitations from Benjamin Lord of Norwich and John Owen of Groton and other ministers

[47] Prince, Christian History, II (1744), 127-32.

[48] Prince, Christian History, II (1744), 136.

of the eastern part of the colony to preach from their pulpits. On June 8 and 9 he preached for David Jewett at New London; many children were affected there. Their reception of the gospel was accompanied with great outcries. When he went to Norwich to preach, his message was also received with physical manifestations. On June 11 he preached twice for Eells at Stonington and the following day once for Owen, in each case with visible results. Then Parsons moved on to preach for Andrew Croswell at Groton, for Lord again at Norwich and for Benjamin Throop in the new fourth society in Norwich.[49]

Over in the second parish at Lyme, under the pastoral direction of George Griswold, people were generally very careless about religious matters until Gilbert Tennent preached there twice on April 1, 1741. Subsequently a great revival broke out in the parish. Evening meetings were set up. On the evening of April 14 when Parsons preached, "the word fell with great power on several." After this, cryings out at the preaching of the word were frequent. During April, May and June about forty made professions of faith in the parish.[50] It should not be concluded, however, that Griswold equated emotional manifestation with conversion. He notes that he always cautioned lest crying-out, fainting and fits be taken as a mark of conversions. He says, ". . . true Conversion is an inward Work of the Spirit of God, turning the Sinner from Darkness to Light, from Satan to God, and from Sin to holiness: it brings the Heart

[49] Prince, Christian History, II (1744), 142.

[50] Prince, Christian History, II (1744), 107.

to embrace Jesus Christ. . ."[51] From what may be known from almost any of the supporters of the Great Awakening who itinerated on its behalf (Whitefield, Parsons, Griswold, Wheelock, Allen, etc.), this would serve as a representative definition.

Windham. Ellen Larned, distinguished historian of Windham County, was not able to discover whether the Awakening began in the county through the preaching of neighboring revivalists, such as Wheelock of Lebanon, Pomeroy of Hebron and Parsons of Lyme, or whether it broke out spontaneously and almost simultaneously in the several towns.[52] The first distinct glimpse of revival within the county limits is given by Wheelock, who preached through Eastern Connecticut on his way to Providence and Boston. When he arrived at Voluntown on October 21, 1741, he found the revival already in progress and Gideon Mills preaching there. Wheelock reported "a great work in this town, but more of the footsteps of Satan than in any place I have yet been in."[53] By this he meant too much emotion accompanied by visions and revelations.

Norwich. Norwich, ten miles south of Windham, had long been a revival center. And Benjamin Lord, pastor of the First Church who had been settled in 1717, was a warm-hearted and successful minister. Though his constitution was far from robust he effectively dispensed all his duties, in spite of the fact that his first wife was confined to bed for

[51] Prince, Christian History, II (1744), 110.

[52] Larned, I, 394.

[53] Larned, I, 396.

sixteen years and could not feed herself for eight of those years. Lord's style of delivery was impressive; one of his contemporaries said, "he seemed to have an inexhaustible fund of proper words, painted sense, and devout affections."[54] Lord was also an effective revivalist. His congregation experienced a revival in 1721, when the great Windham revival broke out;[55] and when revival stirred Northampton, Lord and John Owen of Groton traveled north in 1735 to witness the effects of that revival and get from Edwards an account of it. They brought back reports that initiated revivals in their own parishes.[56] Lord also heartily supported the revival efforts of 1740 and 1741.

While his own preaching and that of itinerants (notably Wheelock) sparked the revival at Norwich, of special note is the ministry of Jedidiah Mills. Mills preached the election sermon at Hartford in May of 1741 in such a powerful manner that his fame spread extensively, and Lord arranged for Mills to preach twice at Norwich during the first week of June. As a result, many spoke so freely of the light they now received that the name "New Lights" was soon cast upon them.[57] Certainly this is an important event in the origin of the use of the terms New Light and Old Light.

Enfield. Of particular significance in bringing the Great Awakening

[54] Frances M. Caulkins, History of Norwich, Connecticut (Hartford: Friends of the Author, 1874), p. 337.

[55] Caulkins, Norwich, p. 193.

[56] Caulkins, Norwich, p. 315.

[57] Isaac Backus, A History of New England (2d ed.; Newton, Mass.: Backus Historical Society, 1871), II, 40.

to Enfield was Edwards' preaching there of his famous sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," on July 8, 1741. Dangling sinners over the pit of hell was not the staple of Edwards' preaching, however, contrary to what many Americans have come to believe. He preached also on a large number of other themes, including divine sovereignty, prayer, the all-sufficiency of Christ and the joy of the life of faith. Edwards had spoken three times before on the text "Their foot shall slide in due time." The development had been quite different the first three times, but the Enfield sermon (the fourth on the text) was almost identical to the third presentation at Northampton not long before.[58] On the third and fourth occasions the theme was the wrath of God and the imminence of everlasting punishment. Stephen Williams recorded an account of the effect of the sermon at Enfield on the day it was delivered:

> We went over to Enfl--where we met dear Mr E-- of N--H-- who preach[d] a most awakening sermon from these words--Deut. 32-35 and before sermon was done--there was a great moaning and crying out through ye whole House--What Shall I do to be Sav[d]--oh I am going to Hell--Oh what shall I do for Christ &c. &c. So yt ye minister was obliged to desist--ye shrieks & cry[s] were piercing & Amazing--after Some time of waiting the Congregation were Still so yt a prayer was made by Mr W. & after that we descen[d] from the pulpitt and discours[d] with the people--Some in one place and Some in another--and Amazing and Astonishing ye power of God was seen--& Several Souls were hopefully wrought upon yt night. & oh ye cheerfulness and pleasantness of their countenances yt receiv[d] comfort--oh yt God wd strengthen and confirm--we sung an hymn & pray[d] & dismiss[d] ye Assembly.[59]

According to Dwight, this sermon was the cause of an immediate and general

[58] Winslow, p. 191.

[59] Oliver Means, A Sketch of the Strict Congregational Church of Enfield, Connecticut (Hartford: Hartford Seminary Press, 1899), p. 19.

revival of religion throughout the town.[60]

But the preacher's method was perhaps even more significant than his message. With keen insight Perry Miller observed:

> Edwards scientifically, deliberately, committed Puritanism, which had been a fervent rationalism of the covenant, to a pure passion of the senses, and the terror he imparted was the terror of modern man, the terror of insecurity. He overthrew the kind of religious philosophy that had dominated Western Europe since the fall of Rome, the system wherein there was always--whether in terms of the City of God, or the Mass and absolution, or of final causes and substantial forms, or at the last, in terms of the Puritan covenant--an ascertainable basis for human safety. . . . Edwards brought mankind, as Protestantism must always bring them, without mitigation, protection or indulgence, face to face with a cosmos fundamentally inhuman: "There are no means within reach that can be any security to them." They are without any refuge, and "all that preserves them every moment is the mere arbitrary will, and uncovenanted, unobliged forbearance of an incensed God." Edwards' preaching was America's sudden leap into modernity.[61]

Awakenings elsewhere. Neither space nor historical records will permit a detailed story of the outbreak or course of the revival in all of the more than 125 parishes of Connecticut in existence during the Great Awakening. But accounts of itinerants active at the time presented earlier, references to revivals in individual places as recorded in this chapter, and the story of separatist churches appearing in a later chapter will, taken collectively, provide comments on a majority of Connecticut towns. In addition, some idea of how many were being converted and added to the churches is provided by the summary of church records appearing in Chapter VII.

Comments have already been made to the effect that the entire colony

[60] S. E. Dwight, The Life of President Edwards (New York: G. & C. & H. Carvill, 1830), p. 145.

[61] Miller, p. 147.

of Connecticut was refreshed by the high tide of revival; there were no dead spots, but some towns were affected more than others. Specifically, every church in Windham County "received large accessions to its membership," according to Miss Larned.[62] Miss Caulkins, able historian of New London, comments that all churches in New London County participated more or less in the Great Awakening.[63] Miss Caulkins goes even further in asserting that all of the eastern towns of the colony were pervaded with New Light excitement and enjoyed a "state of gospel fervor."[64] From the time that Whitefield descended the Connecticut River, religious excitement and tumult upset most of the towns along its banks in Hartford and New Haven counties. Revival fires burned especially bright at Suffield, on the Connecticut River just south of the Massachusetts line. Since the church there was without a pastor, the congregation invited Jonathan Edwards to come from Northampton and lead them in voting to admit the July, 1741, class of converts. At that time ninety-seven joined, including three negroes. In September, Peter Reynolds of Enfield led the church in receiving another seventy-nine converts, including two negroes. Under the new pastor, Ebenezer Gay, another thirty-one converts were received in 1742.[65] Moreover, the published testimony of ten ministers of Fairfield County to the goodness of God in sending revival into their midst and their favor toward it supplements other knowledge of the extent of the Awakening

[62] Larned, I, 394.

[63] Caulkins, New London, p. 453.

[64] Caulkins, Norwich, p. 316.

[65] Records of the First Congregational Church of Suffield, pages unnumbered.

in the West.[66]

It is of great importance to the understanding of the completeness with which the revival covered Connecticut to keep in mind the distances that people traveled to attend meetings. It was, of course, necessary for a great many to travel to produce the kind of crowds that Whitefield and other itinerants addressed. The furious ride of Nathan Cole is a case in point. The Killingly Declaration stated that during the years of the Awakening many journeyed five or six miles on foot to meetings.[67] Wheelock reported in his journal that a woman came more than twenty miles from Kingston, Rhode Island to Voluntown, Connecticut, to hear him and was converted in the meeting.[68] Thus, even though some churches or ministers were opposed to the revival or did not particularly enjoy its blessings, individuals from almost any town in the colony could find a revivalistic meeting of some sort within a reasonable distance of his home. And for about two years, beginning in the latter months of 1740, they did travel to meetings--for prayer, psalm singing and exhortation, and their conversation was largely filled with religious concerns. All of Connecticut was aflame.

Essence of the Awakening

The historian as spectator, standing outside of a movement like the

[66] Prince, Christian History, II (1744), 311-12.

[67] An Historical Narrative and Declaration . . . at Killingly, p. 3.

[68] William Allen (ed.), "Memoir of Rev. Eleazar Wheelock, D. D.," American Quarterly Register, X (1837), 12.

Great Awakening as he does, asks, "What was aflame?" "What was this thid great mass movement all about?" "What was really going on?" The answer must begin with the observation that while the revival must of necessity be treated in general terms and as a mass movement, it was a very personal thing. In a word, at its center was the individual's concern for personal salvation and daily fellowship with his God. Ola Winslow put the matter succinctly:

> . . . this upheaval in American life had to do with the spread of an idea, an idea as old as Christianity; namely, that religion is an individual, inner experience or it is nothing. Decent living is not enough. Without a changed heart, "good works", no matter how good, are shell without substance.[69]

Although Whitefield, Wheelock and many other preachers of the revival were not hellfire preachers, many of the revivalists did try to induce a conversion experience in this way. Often the terror of hell was the first manifestation of the revival, and in more primitive districts it showed itself in shrieks and screams. Sometimes meeting houses were filled with people all crying aloud at once. After the terror came conversion when a sudden light darted in upon the soul which had been released from fear of condemnation through faith in Christ. The individual who had received the new light would cry out with joy and would for weeks afterward live in ecstasy and frequently come to meeting houses to sing praises to his newly-found Redeemer.

In connection with this process of conversion, Edwards found a classic form into which the experience of man fitted. First, the individual is shaken from his "carnal security" and no longer believes that God accepts

[69] Winslow, p. 213.

him. He comes to recognize that prayers, good works and outward obedience will not assure salvation. He is convinced he is outcast and vile and is terrorized thereby. Sometimes he also resents God's power and seeming injustice in considering him a creature of wrath. This period of fear and resentment could last for months or years. Second, this condition eventually reaches a crisis and the individual is drawn to despair; he can discover no way to escape his fate. Then a wonderful change occurs. He comes to realize that God is merciful and all the sinner need do is accept His mercy. Third, the individual is released into a new experience of joy and feels he has been transformed. An awareness of God's love restores him, and his former despair disappears and the new-born man goes out in confidence and power based on his trust in God to live for the glory of God.[70]

The known experience of individuals seems to fit the pattern delineated by Edwards. For instance, Nathan Cole tells how after hearing Whitefield at Middletown he was convinced of the doctrine of election and fell to quarreling with God about it and began to think he was not elected. He said he had been an Arminian who "intended to be saved by my own works such as prayers and good deeds."[71] After passing through a period of great spiritual trial, finally one night he had a vision that God appeared to him and he rejoiced, "My heart was broken; my burden was fallen of my mind; I was set free, my distress was gone, and I was filled with a pineing

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[70] The Works of President Edwards (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1881), III, 300-305.

[71] Cole, p. 6.

to see Christ's own words in the bible . . ."[72]

Hannah Heaton of the North Haven Parish (North parish of New Haven) tells of attending a revival meeting in a schoolhouse on June 20, 1741, after having been under conviction or emotional stress over her lost condition for some time. She relates that soon after the meeting began, the power of God came down and many were crying out on the other side of the room, "What must I do to be saved." She felt moved to go over to them, and as she did she experienced a great melting of soul and sense of the justice of God and condemnation. Therefore she began crying for mercy, after which she became perfectly calm and for a brief time felt as one dead. Presently a sense of joy and forgiveness descended upon her and she went about the room inviting people to come to Christ for salvation. She now felt completely forgiven for her sin and completely cleansed. The time was about 9:00 p. m.[73]

John Fish of Stonington, a friend of Ezra Stiles, kept a spiritual diary from June, 1741, to January, 1745. Though on a more sedate level, it breathes the same introspective and mystical atmosphere as the accounts of Nathan Cole and Hannah Heaton.[74] Fish was one of the Yale students who attended devotional exercises in John Cleveland's room during the

[72] Cole, p. 12.

[73] This 500-page manuscript, unnumbered, is entitled the "Experiences or Spiritual Exercises of Hannah Heaton," and it was presented to her son who fought in the American Revolution. A photocopy is available in the Connecticut Historical Society Library.

[74] The diary of John Fish is in manuscript form at the Yale University Library.

memorable events of 1742.[75] Samuel Hopkins, whose conversion experience while at Yale was noted earlier, is another example of the "meeting with God" that men claimed to have during the Awakening.

Dwight found that Whitefield's October visit to Northampton in 1740 was followed by some of these same "strivings" with God by citizens of the town. These increased during that long, hard winter; and in the spring of 1741 religion became the object of general attention there.[76]

As noted above, men of the period of the Great Awakening were not only concerned about meeting God in an experience of forgiveness, but also were desirous of having a constant sense of His presence day by day as they lived for His glory in the normal activities of life. John Fish's diary reflects this concern, as he lived as a student at Yale. A better-known account that is almost morbidly introspective and condemnatory of one's coldness of heart toward God is David Brainerd's Journal.[77] One might expect a degree of morbidity in the writing of sickly Brainerd; but John Cleveland's diary shows the same introspection, and he was no physical weakling. Cleveland frequently upbraided himself for walking "far from God," being "cold in religion" or demonstrating a lack of love to "the God of heaven and earth."

So when men of the period of the Great Awakening talked about being "new lighted" they referred to an experience of conversion during which

[75] Cleveland, "Diary"; see especially the entry under January 21.

[76] Dwight, p. 146.

[77] See Jonathan Edwards (ed.), Memoirs of the Rev. David Brainerd (New Haven: S. Converse, 1822).

a new light of forgiveness and joy flooded their souls. And this experience issued in good works or a life of service. Good works and upright life could not earn salvation, however; that was an "Arminian doctrine." If the extant contemporary accounts are a fair indication, the whole countryside was electrified with a concern over gaining the "new light" that came with conversion and "joy of soul" that accompanied continuing fellowship with God. Connecticut was aflame with a new religious passion.

While the Nathan Coles, the Hannah Heatons and Samuel Hopkinses were claiming a "new light" in their souls inculcated by a work of the Spirit of God, they were also claiming a new warmth in their hearts which issued in love toward God and love for the brethren. But not all heat in evidence at the time was love. There was the heat of controversy between New Lights and Old Lights and excitement engendered by social disorganization, individualism and the like. Men are social, economic and political beings as well as religious beings. Religion could not be divorced from the problems of society in the days of Whitefield, Edwards and Wheelock any more than it could be in the days of Luther, Calvin and Knox or any other period of history. Some of these non-religious features of the Awakening have been alluded to earlier in this chapter. And these non-religious issues must be kept in mind along with religious concerns in answering the questions put earlier: "What was aflame?" or "What was really going on?"

CHAPTER VI

EBB TIDE AND CONSEQUENCES

The revival flame that burned so brightly in most Connecticut communities during the summer of 1741 burned observably lower by the end of the year in many places. Though a few communities did not enjoy its blessings until 1742, in a majority of places the flame was already sputtering by then. By 1743 it had gone out almost everywhere.[1] While the effects of the Awakening would be evident in American society for another century or more, the revival itself lasted for less than two years in New England. No doubt this was true to a large degree because of the great intensity and all-pervasiveness of the movement. As Gaustad observed,

> The dreadful concerns, the traumatic awakenings, the accelerated devotion--these by their nature are of limited duration. The fever pitch must soon pass, else the patient dies . . . . The ebb of this flood of revivalism would seem then to require no elaborate explanation: it declined simply because it had to, because society could not maintain itself in so great a disequilibrium.[2]

That the revival had generally come to an end by early in 1743 is indicated by the publication of the Christian History, in which Thomas Prince, Jr., the editor, hoped to present a record of the recent revival for a grateful Christian public. Volume I, numbers 1-52, ran from March, 1743, to February, 1744; Volume II, numbers 53-104, spanned the next year, March, 1744,

[1] A study of the tabulation of conversions in the next chapter will in part demonstrate the truth of this claim.

[2] Edwin S. Gaustad, The Great Awakening in New England (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1965; orig. pub., 1957), pp. 61-2.

to February, 1745.[3]

If one grants that the Great Awakening had to come to an end in New England in a short time and that it had in fact done so by the end of 1742, he is still left with the question as to why the post-revival violence. Gaustad queries:

> . . . if the cessation of intense Awakening was normal and expected, was even openly predicted, why was it in fact accompanied by such noise and clamor, bitterness and schism? Flood waters normally display all their vengeful fury as they advance, while their retreat is chastened and still.[4]

One might add, "And why did the end of the revival have to be so final?" Many communities in Massachusetts and Connecticut that had experienced revivals in 1734 and 1735 experienced them again in 1741. In the Middle Colonies revivals continued sporadically after the main thrust of the Great Awakening. Why did New England's Awakening end so suddenly and fail to revive later? The answer seems to be that Connecticut society had atomized. Or, if that is too strong a word, it had factionalized. Most people in the colony took sides as members of the Old Light, moderate New Light or radical New Light factions. The application of the law of 1742 against itinerancy and the law of 1743 virtually outlawing toleration threw many communities into an uproar. County associations and consociations were determined to maintain the power of the Congregational establishment and in the process brought on further disputes. Then, as religious enthusiasm waned, patches which had covered the old rents in the social fabric came undone; and underlying problems appeared more severe than ever in the

[3] Printed in Boston by S. Kneeland and T. Green.

[4] Gaustad, p. 62.

new context of emotional unrest. To make matters worse, the prospect of a return of Whitefield to New England stirred new controversy, and about the same time the outbreak of war focused men's minds on distinctly non-religious subjects.

Rise of Factions

The radicals. Probably to a large degree the wrangling and bitterness that followed the Great Awakening in Connecticut began with the itinerancy of the promoters of the revival at its very beginning. Of course such activity when uninvited threw doubt on the abilities of the settled minister to handle his charge effectively or even on his spiritual condition. It was a short step from implied incapacity of a settled minister to dispense his parish responsibilities to an overt charge that he was unconverted and a blind leader of the blind. Whitefield had indicated a belief that many ministers of New England were unconverted. Davenport and others had particularized that charge, pronouncing against individual ministers by name in public meetings. These radicals not only pronounced their ministerial opponents unconverted but hurled at them such scurrilous epithets as "Dead Dogs," "Lying Shepherds," "Followers of the Beast and Dragon," "Pharisees," and"Seed of the Serpent." It was bad enough when an ordained minister such as Davenport with a Yale degree and a church of his own itinerated and made severe charges, but no settled minister of Connecticut would countenance such criticisms when they came from the lips of an uneducated exhorter. Lay exhorters were especially to be found in the counties of New London

and Windham.[5] An example of what some of the more conservative sort thought of these lay exhorters was penned by "A. M." in 1742:

> There is a Creature here whom perhaps you never heard of before. It is called an Exhorter . . . . Its distinguishing Qualities are Ignorance, Impudence, Zeal. Numbers of these Exhorters are amongst the People here. They go from Town to Town . . . . they move their Hearers, make them cry, faint, swoon, fall into Convulsions. The Converts are all made in this Manner; first, they become concerned for their Souls, and greatly distressed, and not rarely distracted. In this condition they continue for some Days, and then all at once without any visible Means, they come out of their dark and disconsolate state, all Light, Joy, Extacy. This they express by their Talk to their neighbours, which they call, telling their Experiences, and, in many Places, by immoderate Laughter, and singing of Hymns.[6]

This quotation introduces not only itinerancy and lay exhortation but the emphasis of the radicals on emotionalism. Charles Chauncy concluded, "Religion of late has been more a commotion in the Passions than a change in the Temper of the Mind."[7] Chauncy's feeling about lay exhorters is clear from his description of them:

> Men of all Occupations, who are vain enough to think themselves fit to be Teachers of others; Men who, though they have no Learning, and but small Capacities, yet imagine they are able, and without Study too, to speak to the spiritual Profit of such as are willing to hear them . . ."[8]

In general it may be said that behind the freewheeling spirit of the radical itinerant lay the conviction that many of the regular clergy were unconverted and harmful to the chances of their parishoners for salvation. They insisted that ministers, as well as laymen, have an assurance of

[5] Benjamin Trumbull, A Complete History of Connecticut (New Haven: Maltby, Goldsmith & Co., 1818), II, 160.

[6] A. M., State of Religion in New England . . . (Glasgow: Robert Foulis, 1742), pp. 8-9.

[7] Charles Chauncy, Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion (Boston: Rogers and Fowle, 1743), p. 109.

[8] Chauncy, p. 226.

salvation. This assurance was instantaneous, a kind of irradiation, that occurred within the souls of saints at the time they placed their faith in Christ. The demand for an identifiable conversion experience and the confidence that such an experience was a valid awakening was thought to place the individual among the elect. Above all, the radicals insisted upon a simple, categorical distinction between saved and not saved. Once an individual had a particular experience of conversion, he frequently developed a bold self-confidence in his ability to judge the possibility of another's having that experience simply by engaging him in conversation. An example of what might happen in a radical or separatist treatment of one of their own number occurred on February 2, 1743. Natt Williams of Stonington while a house guest of Joshua Hempstead at New London decided to go over to the Shepherd's Tent, where the separatists were conducting services. There he related his Christian experience, expecting to receive approval of the group, "but beheld the Quite contrary, for they upon Examination find him yet in an unconverted Estate & Judged him Sō & he Confesses the Justice of their Judgment." Hempstead noted that Williams had judged others at various times.[9]

This emphasis on a conversion experience and assurance of salvation was not new to Puritanism. The seventeenth century Puritan Samuel Lee may be noted as one of those of an earlier generation who had preached much the same viewpoint.[10] Actually, much of what the radical or moderate

[9] "Diary of Joshua Hempstead of New London, Connecticut," Proceedings of the New London County Historical Society, I (1901), 405.

[10] Samuel Lee, Joy of Faith . . . (Boston: Samuel Green, 1687), see especially pp. 168-72.

revivalists of the period of the Great Awakening taught was not new. Even the emotionalism manifested in the revival services of the 1740s dated back to the first generation of Puritans in New England. Thomas Hooker had experienced this sort of thing from his preaching in the Connecticut Valley in 1643 and before.[11] But times had changed. Connecticut had become more sophisticated, and a church establishment had been erected (rejected by the radicals), an establishment that was now threatened by itinerancy and lay exhortation. So church and state opposed the radicals, often forcing them to a more radical position and often painting them a deeper red in their pronouncements than they really were. The radicals revolted against the conservatism, the formalism and the rigid ecclesiastical discipline of the established churches of the colony.

Comments Blake, "If they did not feel a minister's preaching, as they expressed it, they declared that he was unconverted; or that he was legal and dead, and did not preach Christ with power."[12] When they reached such a conclusion, they themselves separated from congregations of which they were a part and encouraged others to do likewise. While it is true that the radical view of assurance of salvation, insistence on a converted church membership, and emphasis on emotion were not new to Connecticut Puritanism and that these people were not therefore out of step with their heritage, their complete lack of tact and extreme emotionalism often destroyed their acceptance.[13] Blake may be noted again with good effect,

[11] Thomas Prince, Jr., The Christian History, I (1744), 226.

[12] S. Leroy Blake, The Separates or Strict Congregationalists of New England (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1902), p. 90.

[13] For a detailed account of the radical separatist movement in Connecticut, see Chapters VIII and IX.

> They betrayed a total lack of that balance and poise which are essential to give permanency and weight to a movement. Their disposition was to make religion consist in emotions, in outcries, in bodily agitations, in great fears and excessive joys, in zeal and talk. They claimed that the power of godliness lay in such outcries, and that bodily motions were the outward manifestation of the inward spirit, and that where the former were lacking, the latter did not exist.[14]

The radicals, then, were their own worst enemies; and they were really enemies of the effective promotion of the revival as well. In fact, they may be said to have brought it to an end. Humphrey concluded that James Davenport in a very real sense arrested the progress of the Awakening in 1742 with his excesses.[15] Apparently many in Whitefield's day also felt that the radicals had been largely responsible for the end of the Awakening. When Whitefield returned to Boston on his second tour of New England in 1744, he commented to a group of ministers in a private home:

> I found by what . . . I had heard by letters that the work of God had went on in a most glorious manner for near two Years after my departure from New England, but then a chill came over the work, through the imprudence of some Ministers who had been promoters and private persons who had been happy subjects of it.[16]

Commenting on the effect of radical activity, S. E. Dwight concluded:

> It thus introduced contentions and quarrels into the churches and families, alienated ministers from each other, and from their people, and produced, in the places where these consequences were most discernible, a wide-spread and riveted prejudice against revivals of religion. It is deserving perhaps of enquiry, whether the

[14] Blake, p. 89.

[15] Heman Humphrey, Revival Sketches and Manual (New York: American Tract Society, 1859), p. 86.

[16] George Whitefield's Journals (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1960), p. 529.

> subsequent slumber of the American Church, for nearly seventy years, may not be ascribed, in an important degree, to the fatal re-action of these unhappy measures.[17]

Conservatives. The Old Lights were opposed to the whole movement of the Great Awakening and thus were the direct opposites of the radicals. All of the Old Lights seemed to agree that enthusiasm or emotionalism and separatism were the two major evils of the Great Awakening, evils that outweighed any good it might achieve. Along with their worry over enthusiasm went a concern over the radical viewpoint that an educated ministry or premeditated sermons were unnecessary. With their concern over separatism went a recognition of the fact that itinerancy, separatism and the Strict Congregational view of church polity would bring down the whole Connecticut establishment like a house of cards. The Old Lights were in no sense theological liberals. They felt that the radical approach was foreign to the New England way, that it vulgarized the church and violated the Puritan tradition of a rational approach to religion. They put more stress on establishment, status quo, education and decorum. They commonly accepted a need for a regeneration experience too, but they felt that there should be more of an intellectual preparation of the individual before the work of grace could begin than did the radicals. Joseph Noyes and Thomas Clap of New Haven were leaders among the Old Lights of Connecticut. These men were also upset about another threat that came out of the Awakening. Word had gotten around that on Whitefield's visit to Northampton in 1740 he had confided to Jonathan Edwards a plan by which certain

[17] Sereno E. Dwight, The Life of President Edwards (New York: G. & C. & H. Carvill, 1830), p. 193.

of the American clergy were to be replaced by British men of the cloth. Thomas Clap subsequently published a statement to this effect,[18] and it naturally let loose a torrent of criticism because it looked like a case of American countrymen against a British invasion. Edwards in a literary battle that followed managed to exonerate Whitefield from the false charge. In the process he put Clap in a corner on page after page. For this Clap never forgave Edwards and the Northampton theologian became persona non grata at his own alma mater. Thereafter he attended the Princeton commencement.[19]

The Moderates. The moderate New Lights supported the Awakening but deplored excesses connected with it. They favored it as a whole but endeavored to preserve it from ingredients which they regarded as coming not from the Spirit of God but from human weaknesses and satanic malice. They strove to point all preaching and theology toward spiritual rebirth as they had known it. These New Light friends of the revival opposed lay exhortation almost to a man,[20] and most of them opposed separatism on any basis except well established heterodoxy on the part of minister and church.[21] Moreover, they erected a solid phalanx against the emotional disorders connected with conversion in some places. It has already been

[18] A Letter from the Reverend Mr. Thomas Clap . . . to a Friend in Boston . . . (Boston: T. Fleet, 1745).

[19] Ola E. Winslow, Jonathan Edwards (New York: Macmillan Co., 1940), p. 208.

[20] Gaustad, p. 73.

[21] See the unpublished dissertation (Harvard, 1960) by Richard L. Bushman, "Government and Society in Connecticut 1690-1760," p. 317.

seen that Jonathan Edwards, Jonathan Parsons and Gilbert Tennent had cautioned against misguided zeal and that James Davenport would later renounce his extremism. Trumbull could not find evidence of one settled minister of the colony who favored any of the disorders connected with the emotionalism of the period.[22] In his Memoirs Wheelock pronounced against the "wild torrent of delusion" of the separatist movement.[23] And as noted earlier, the moderates tended to avoid itinerancy after the middle of 1742 unless properly invited to speak elsewhere. Actually almost none of the moderate clergy, though they traveled a great deal in promoting the revival, had ever preached where they were not invited.

It is time to ask who these moderate New Lights were. They were members of the established clergy of Connecticut who favored the revival. Since they were part of the establishment, they could hardly be expected to attack the foundations of the structure with which they were connected. Only one of them, Timothy Allen of West Haven, even briefly threw in his lot with the radicals. Some would also put Andrew Croswell (a 1728 graduate of Harvard) of the North Groton Church in the radical group. To be sure, there were differences of opinion within the moderate camp, but none of them could be classified as holding basic tenets of the radicals. It has already been seen that the Connecticut clergy split about evenly between New Lights and Old Lights. Leaders in the New Light camp included Jedidiah Mills, Benjamin Pomeroy, Eleazar Wheelock and Joseph Bellamy.

[22] Trumbull, II, 170.

[23] David M' Clure and Elijah Parish (eds.), Memoirs of the Rev. Eleazar Wheelock, D. D. (Newburyport, Mass.: Edward Little & Co., 1811), p. 15.

Some other important members of the group were Lord of Norwich, Williams of Lebanon, Parsons of Lyme, Owen of Groton, Robbins of Branford, Graham of Woodbury and Farrand of Canaan. While many of the New Lights may have had second thoughts about the Saybrook Platform, they generally supported it. They also commonly followed the Half-Way Covenant, and many of them were not quite sure about how much to insist on the doctrine of assurance.

Though the moderate New Lights were members of the clergy, they were also members of churches. While it is not possible to furnish definitive statements on how Connecticut's church members were divided among Old Light, moderate New Light and radical New Light camps, an educated guess is possible, based on extensive exposure to Connecticut church records and town and county histories. Probably it is not far wrong to conclude that at least three fifths of the church members of Windham and New London counties were New Light and that something like one of those fifths were radicals. While the number of New Lights was large in Hartford County, it probably did not reach a majority and probably not over one fourth of the New Lights there were radicals. In New Haven (outside the town of New Haven), Litchfield and Fairfield counties, New Lights definitely were in the minority and few of them were radicals.

Separatism. The radical separatists felt that the New Light moderates had not gone far enough in maintaining a pure church membership and in insisting on the relation of a conversion experience as a condition for membership. Moreover, they held to the more strict congregationalism of the Cambridge Platform. So they tended to separate from some of the revivalist ministers of the colony. To the radicals, what the moderates

proffered was an incomplete reformation which they wanted to carry to its logical conclusion. Thus, for example, they formed separate churches at East Lyme, although Pastor George Griswold was one of the most assiduous revivalists in Connecticut: at Norwich, withdrawing from the church of Benjamin Lord whom Joseph Parsons counted as a dedicated revivalist; and and at Enfield, separating from a man who had invited Edwards to aid in promoting the revival in that church.[24]

Separatism was more than opposition to Old Lights or New Lights who were deemed guilty of an incomplete reformation. To a great extent the intensity of the revival had temporarily soothed tempers ruffled by old squabbles or at least it had diverted attention from non-religious concerns. Now the disputes that had been plaguing many communities broke out all over again, disputes over the location of meeting houses, payment of the pastor, and many other things. Bushman claims that fully twelve per cent of the ministers of New England and Long Island quarrelled with their parishoners over salary payments between 1680 and 1740 and that five per cent of them left their pulpits as a result.[25] Such disputes did not end in the midst of uncertain economic conditions of the 1740s. Some meeting-house controversies never abated during the height of the Awakening. At Plymouth the church was founded in 1740 and called Samuel Todd as pastor. He studied the revival at Stockbridge, Massachusetts, and returned to establish prayer meetings and to promote the Awakening in his parish.

[24] For a discussion of the Separate movement and the upheaval connected with it, see the next two chapters.

[25] Bushman, p. 252.

Many of his congregation rebelled against him and abandoned his preaching. The struggle over where the church was to be built coalesced with the controversy over the Awakening. The west side people wanted the church on their side of the town; and when they did not get it, they sought to withdraw and form a separate church. When the General Assembly refused to set up another Congregational church in the community for the disaffected element, about one third of the society became Episcopal.[26]

It is extremely instructive to observe that at Norwich, one of the fastest-growing communities in the colony, where five parishes had now been struck off by the General Assembly, separatist churches sprang up in all five parishes. In the midst of dynamic growth it is always harder to resolve differences of opinion in a community because nicely wrought out compromises are constantly upset and wrangling breaks out all over again.

Clerical squabbles. The division of New England's religious camp into three opposing factions was something new to the region. Always before, at least an external appearance of unity had been maintained. Now members of the clergy were attacking each other in print. The Old Lights struck the first major blow by publishing in Boston a testimony "Against several Errors in Doctrine, and Disorders in Practice, Which have of Late obtained in various Parts of the Land" in May of 1743.[27] Purportedly this was an attack on the Great Awakening by the ministers of Massachusetts

[26] History of Litchfield County, Connecticut (Philadelphia: J. W. Lewis & Co., 1881), p. 252.

[27] The Testimony of the Pastors of the Churches in the Province of the Massachusetts-Bay in New-England . . . (Boston, 1743).

Bay, but apparently only a minority of them had had a hand in it. This testimony brought charges and counter-charges in published pamphlets[28] and a conclave of pro-revival ministers in Boston on July 7. About seventy strong, the latter gave open testimony regarding the revival of religion without censuring those who did not see things in the same light.[29] Subsequently over forty others sent in their assent to the statement made. Nearly all of these were from Massachusetts, but a few represented New Hampshire and Rhode Island. Though Connecticut clergy were too far away to participate, they did send in some expression of opinion later. Ten ministers of the Fairfield East Association sent in their testimony to the late revival that same year,[30] as did ten ministers who met at Norwich on June 23.[31]

Not only did groups of ministers take positions on the Awakening, notable individuals went into print as well. The debate between Clap and Edwards has already been noted, but the major one that was known to all New England was between Chauncy and Edwards. In 1741 the two leaders do not seem to have been far apart. Edwards in his commencement address at Yale, The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God, had cautiously supported the revival, pointing out some evils of emotionalism.

[28] Joshua Gee, A Letter to the Reverend Mr. Nathanael Eells (Boston: J. Draper, 1743) attacked the moderator of the Old Light conclave. Benjamin Prescott, A Letter to the Reverend Mr. Joshua Gee (Boston: Green, Bushell and Allen, 1743) was an Old Light answer to Gee.

[29] Prince, Christian History, I (1743), 156-64.

[30] Prince, Christian History, II (1744), 311-12.

[31] Prince, Christian History, I (1743), 195-96.

Chauncy in his The Out-pouring of the Holy Ghost recognized there were many in the land on whom the blessing of God's Spirit had fallen. During the following year the divergence became more obvious when Chauncy published his Enthusiasm Described and Caution'd Against. Here he took more direct aim at the revival, scoring the dangers of enthusiasm; but this work was directed largely at the excesses of Davenport.

In 1743 the gulf between the two men became clear, increasingly deep and irrevocable. In March Edwards published a revision of his New Haven sermon under the title Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New-England. By this time his temerity of 1741 had largely disappeared; the work that had been going on is declared to be a work of God. He observed that it had been denounced because men looked at the controversy caused by itinerants rather than at the changed lives of people; and it had been denounced by those who had no room for emotion in religion. Edwards was not blind to the excesses of the Awakening, however. He devoted a full section to such errors as spiritual pride, censorious judgments and lay exhortation. Later in 1743 Chauncy brought off the press his Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New England. This treatise in five parts sought to answer the five parts of Edwards' work published earlier in the year. It blasted emotionalism and concentrated on the reports of shriekings and screamings in religious services. Three fourths of his more than 400 pages dealt with a discussion of things of a bad and dangerous tendency in the revival and sought on that basis to discredit the whole movement. He especially scored such things as itinerancy, censoriousness and doctrinal error. Chauncy wanted judgment and will to control emotion. Perry Miller characterized

Seasonable Thoughts as "a classic of hard-headed, dogmatic rationalism."[32] Edwards, though always on guard against extremes of emotionalism, published in 1746 his great Treatise Concerning Religious Affections, the thesis of which was that true religion consists largely in holy affection. Though the divergence of Edwards and Chauncy was clear in 1743, the former had not yet moved into a strict Calvinism that would reject Stoddardeanism; nor had the latter moved from Calvinism in the direction of Arminianism and Universalism.[33]

Official Efforts to Maintain the Church Establishment

While the lines of battle were being drawn between individual supporters or opponents of the Awakening, lines were also being drawn on an official level in Connecticut. The Old Lights dominated the General Association of the Congregational establishment and at least the New Haven, Fairfield and Hartford County associations. By 1745 and perhaps earlier the Old Lights also controlled the Windham Association. Governor Talcott, who had called the days of the revival at its height "a time of refreshing" was no more; and Jonathan Law had come to the governor's chair in 1741 with an entirely different outlook. The Old Lights also dominated the Assembly and sought to pass laws to crush the Awakening. The act which they passed in 1742 against exhorters, lay preachers and itinerant evangelists has already been noted. In May, 1743, virtually all religious liberty was

[32] Perry Miller, Jonathan Edwards (New York: William Sloane Associates, Inc., 1949), p. 176.

[33] For an excellent discussion of the literary debate between Edwards and Chauncy, see Gaustad, pp. 80-101.

destroyed when the Assembly repealed the toleration act of 1708 and substituted a new arrangement which denied dissenters rights to Congregationalists and made the Saybrook Platform binding on all.[34] Now the Old Lights were fully armed to do battle. Implementation of both of these laws would increasingly inflame the passions of Connecticut citizens and fill them with anger and bitterness instead of a heart warm toward God.

Even before action was taken by the Assembly to clamp the lid on New Lightism, the New Haven Association had met to take action against Timothy Allen, pastor of the West Haven church. The principle article alleged against him was that he said, ". . . the reading of the scriptures, without the concurring influence and operation of the spirit of God, will no more convert a sinner, than reading an old Almanac."[35] Perhaps they did not know it, but on such a basis the Association would have had to prefer charges against Luther, Calvin, Knox and probably even St. Augustine. At any rate, Allen lamented the manner of expression and offered to make confession to the Association but the council dismissed him, "and it is said with this ill-natured triumph that they had blown out one new light, and that they would blow them all out."[36] Of course they did not blow Allen out; their action only made him more radical and he subsequently was associated with Davenport in the extremism of the separatists at New London. He became an effective minister later on, however, and was still serving a

[34] Charles J. Hoadly (ed.), The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut (Hartford: Case, Lockwood and Brainard, 1870), VIII, 521-22.

[35] Samuel Orcutt and Ambrose Beardsley, The History of the Old Town of Derby, Connecticut (Springfield, Mass.: Springfield Printing Co., 1880), p. 138.

[36] Orcutt and Beardsley, p. 138.

church in Chesterfield, Massachusetts in his eighties.[37] Later in the year, after the law against itinerancy was passed, two justices of the peace on September 24 brought complaint to the clerk of the parish in Derby (west New Haven County) against Pastor Daniel Humphrey for preaching in the First Society of New Haven. Humphrey had preached to a group of Baptists in New Haven and soon after was deprived of his seat in the New Haven Association.[38]

One of the most prolonged and hard-fought battles of the Awakening swirled around the head of Philemon Robbins of Branford. Acting on a written invitation of the Baptist minister in Wallingford, he agreed to preach there on January 6, 1742. For his efforts he was complained of as a disorderly person to the Consociation of Hartford County on February 9 by Samuel Whittelsey's church in Wallingford. Robbins could not understand why this was disorderly because the request had been written and because Governor Talcott had advised Wallingford collectors not to collect ministerial taxes from Baptists there, tantamount to official recognition of the group. He was advised, however, that the Baptist assembly was not a lawful society. Finally in 1745 he was deposed from the ministry for this "illegal" act. His church stood by him, however, voted to renounce the Saybrook Platform and adopt the Cambridge Platform, though the church does not seem to have become a separate church. Ultimately he was restored

[37] Jared Ingersoll, in his unpublished "An Historical Account of Some Affairs Relating to the Church, Especially in Connecticut," under entries dated February 14 and March 10, 1742, stated that on those days the case of Allen came before the Association; final action was taken at the second meeting.

[38] Orcutt and Beardsley, pp. 137-38.

to fellowship in the Association.[39]

In 1744 the new church at Salisbury was organized on the Cambridge Platform, in defiance of the vote of the Legislature. The church and town chose Jonathan Lee, a graduate of Yale and a New Light, as their minister and proceeded to his ordination. Mark Leavenworth of Waterbury, Daniel Humphrey of Derby and Samuel Todd of Northbury assisted in the service, and forthis offence they were suspended by the associations to which they belonged.[40] That same year, in May, John Owen of Groton and Benjamin Pomeroy of Hebron were brought before the Assembly to answer charges. Both of them had been very critical of the laws of the colony concerning religion and for some of their remarks had been indicted. Since Owen had been charged on only one count, and since he had made some concessions to the Court, he was simply admonished for his behavior (which was regarded as more a result of misguided zeal than contempt of the government) and sentenced to pay costs of prosecution.[41] Pomeroy was charged with two counts and had made more prolonged attack on the establishment and could not expect so much mercy. Pomeroy had powerful friends in and out of the Assembly and great efforts were made to secure his acquittal, but to no avail. He was deprived of his salary for seven years, but his people supported him by voluntary contributions.[42]

[39] Blake, pp. 17-18, 48; Isaac Backus, A History of New England (2d ed.; Newton, Mass.: Backus Historical Society, 1871), II, 42-3; Trumbull, II, 196-233.

[40] Blake, p. 48.

[41] Charles R. Stark, Groton, Connecticut, 1705-1905 (Stonington, Conn.: Published by the Author, 1922), p. 128.

[42] Blake, p. 48; Gaustad, p. 75.

The lines were being more tightly drawn at Yale too. In May of 1742 the trustees in a meeting at Wethersfield determined that the members of the college would be required to attend the regular stated worship of the town on Sundays and that they could not attend any other services on week days without permission of the Rector, on pain of expulsion.[43] This action was designed to keep students from supporting the defection from the New Haven church then occurring. Of course it said nothing about what a student might do during a vacation period at home. John Cleveland and his brother Josiah, Yale students, attended separate meetings at their home town of Canterbury in Windham County at which their uncle, Solomon Paine, was the preacher. For this they were called to account. John Cleveland, the elder of the two, reported that he had inquired of a trustee whether there was a college law forbidding a student to attend such a meeting and was informed that such a law had been prepared but not passed. To this Clap replied icily, "The laws of God and the College are one."[44] After continued interrogation and the hardening of the Clevelands' conviction that Clap's accusations were unreasonable, the rector expelled them in January of 1745. The Clevelands addressed the General Assembly in April, 1745, explaining their case, pointing out that the majority of the church in Canterbury were of the separatist group and that the toleration act gave privileges to Anglicans, Baptists and Quakers and it should to them also. After further argumentation, they asked that the Assembly order

[43] Ingersoll, Historical Account.

[44] Louis L. Tucker, Puritan Protagonist (Chapel Hill, N. C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1962), p. 139.

that they be reinstated. The General Assembly told Clap and the tutors they were welcome to appear before the Assembly in May. When the Yale officials presented their case, the Assembly decided to dismiss the Cleveland memorial.[45] The expulsion of these young men made a great clamor in the colony and created widespread resentment against college officials and the Old Light position. Ultimately the Clevelands received their degrees without the formality of attendance.[46]

In the midst of all the calumnies and rancor of the 1740s, the radical New Lights became increasingly upset over actions of the Connecticut establishment and its efforts to maintain its power. The actions noted in this chapter have concerned almost exclusively moderate New Lights, but the separatists felt much more forcefully the brunt of the law. Their preachers were being hauled off to jail, their members were being jailed or ill-treated in other ways for failure to pay taxes for support of the establishment. Love for God and love for the brethren which presumably had been engendered in the late revival declined and virtually disappeared in many quarters as wrangling over rates and ecclesiastical rights became the order of the day.[47] In an effort to quiet some of the confusion, the Associated ministers of Windham County published an open letter to their

[45] Connecticut Archives: Colleges and Schools, 1st Ser., Pt. II of Vol. I, 280a, b, c, d, Connecticut State Library.

[46] Franklin B. Dexter, Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale College, 1701-1745 (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1885), II, 30.

[47] For a discussion of the separatist movement and its problems, see the next two chapters.

people about the errors of the separatists in 1745;[48] and in 1747 a council of the consociated churches of the county pronounced against the teachings and activities of the Mansfield and Canterbury separate churches.[49] It is interesting to note that such New Lights as Eleazar Wheelock and Stephen White were present when both of these documents were drawn up and gave their assent to them.

The Return of Whitefield

After the bitterness and controversy of 1742-44, George Whitefield returned to New England. His welcome was destined to be very different this time. The Old Lights had declared against him and would close the doors of many of their churches to him; New England was fractured with debate over the value of his previous visit and its effects. When the master revivalist landed at York, Maine, on October 26, 1744, he was met by Samuel Buell, now of East Hampton, Long Island, and the following day by Benjamin Pomeroy and Jonathan Parsons of Connecticut and others.[50] Whitefield was desperately ill for some time during the early days of this stay in New England, but he gradually regained his strength and was able to resume a schedule near to that followed on his first journey through the region.

Whitefield's whole approach was irenic as he met with a group of

[48] A Letter from the Associated Ministers of the County of Windham, to the People in the Said County (Boston: J. Draper, 1745).

[49] The Result of a Council of the Consociated Churches of the County of Windham . . . (Boston: J. Draper, 1747).

[50] Whitefield's Journals, pp. 517-18.

Boston clergy on November 27 (and throughout the rest of the trip, for that matter):

> I said, I was sorry if anything I wrote had been a means of promoting separations for I was of no separating principles, but came to New England to preach the Gospel of peace . . . in my way to Georgia, and promote charity and love among all . . .[51]

On November 30 he preached at Brattle Street Church and the New North Church and showed again his concern over healing wounds:

> The Congregations were very large at both places, and many people's prejudices, which had been raised in their minds upon a surmise that I would encourage separations and countenance disorders, I found wore away apace.[52]

In spite of the obvious effort of Whitefield to placate his opposition, they would not be placated; their minds had been made up. Harvard College president and professors produced a testimony against Whitefield dated December 28, 1744, which said in part: "We look upon Mr. Whitefield's going about in an itinerant way, especially as he has so much of anthusiastical turn of mind, as being utterly inconsistent with the peace and order, if not the very being, of the Churches of Christ." They also charged him with "enthusiasm," with being "an uncharitable, censorious, and slanderous man" and denounced his "rashness and arrogance."[53] Whitefield's reply, dated January 23, 1745, was written in a style and tone of a high order.[54]

[51] Whitefield's Journals, p. 529.

[52] Whitefield's Journals, p. 531.

[53] Luke Tyerman, The Life of the Reverend George Whitefield (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1876), II, 133. Tyerman notes nine other written pronouncements against Whitefield on this journey through New England.

[54] It may be found in part in Tyerman, II, 134.

The faculty of Yale College published their own declaration against Whitefield on February 25. In it they endorsed the testimony of the Harvard faculty and added two special points of grievance: 1. That Whitefield and other itinerants planned to turn out many of the established clergy and introduce a new set attached to himself; 2. That Whitefield planned to bring over a number of young men from England to be ordained by the Tennents and supply some ministers from his orphan house.[55]

The ministers of the Hartford Association united on February 5, 1745, in a public printed testimony against Whitefield and his conduct, warning the people not to hear him.[56] The Association of the County of New Haven made a pronouncement against him on February 19; and on June 18, 1745, the General Association of the colony voted that "it would by no means be advisable for any of our ministers to admit him into our pulpits or for any of our people to attend upon his Preaching and Administrations."[57]

It is not particularly germane to the present discussion to summarize Whitefield's experience in the other colonies of New England. Suffice it to say that while a few church doors were closed to him, he preached in most of the Boston churches, preached to large crowds in many other places (including mass meetings outdoors), and was often attended by groups of ministers. How much effect Whitefield's second journey to New England had

[55] The Declaration of the Rector and Tutors of Yale-College . . . Against the Reverend Mr. George Whitefield . . . (Boston: T. Fleet, 1745).

[56] The Testimony of the North Association in the County of Hartford, in the Colony of Connecticut . . . Against the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield and his Conduct (Boston: Rogers and Fowle, 1745).

[57] Williston Walker, A History of the Congregational Churches in the United States (3d ed.; New York: The Christian Literature Co., 1898), p. 265.

on the populace is hard to discover. His last journal is incomplete, breaking off before he even arrived in Connecticut, and gives only a few inferences about receptivity of the crowds. Other documentation concerning what happened on this trip is also sparse. How long he spent in Connecticut on this occasion is not clear. He reached New Haven in June and, denied permission to use the church, preached from a platform constructed on the green. Whitefield preached for several days in Norwich, beginning on August 1; at the north parish of New London on August 9; in the New London town-plot August 10; under an oak tree at New London twice on August 11, at which time people from Norwich, Stonington and Lyme attended; on August 12 at Lyme, where he had been followed by crowds. Then the party (including his wife) moved on to Long Island.[58] Apparently the moderate New Lights never turned their backs on Whitefield, even though they greatly protested some of the extremes that followed in his wake. The eminent Eleazar Wheelock urged him to return again in a letter mailed to Whitefield on November 8, 1757.[59]

The Effect of War

Whatever temporary benefit may have been derived from Whitefield's second itineration was vitiated by continued separatist clamor in Connecticut and their war against the establishment, and by the fact that Connecticut minds were momentarily distracted from religious issues by the coming

[58] Frances M. Caulkins, History of New London, Connecticut (New London: H. D. Utley, 1895), p. 459.

[59] Wheelock Memoirs, pp. 214-15.

of King George's War. "On to Louisbourg!" became a more persistent cry in the ears of many than "On to Zion!" The General Assembly on February 7, 1745, ordered that five hundred Connecticut men be raised in the campaign against the stronghold of Louisbourg. These troops were to embark at and return to New London. They embarked on Saturday, April 13. After the fort fell three hundred more Connecticut men were sent to aid in its occupation. On June 30, 1746, one thousand men from the colony participated in the campaign against Canada.[60]

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It is not enough to say that the Great Awakening in Connecticut came to an end just because men could not endure such intensity of religious experience for long. In part the end came too because of the indiscretion of some of its best friends and the division of the religiously inclined into camps which opposed each other with increasing intensity. Intensity turned to bitterness in many instances as the establishment tried to collect the ecclesiastical rates from separatists, who often suffered confiscation of property and jail sentences for failure to pay. Economic, social, and political animosities coalesced with developing religious squabbles to make the struggles more severe. Opposing factions declared themselves for or against Whitefield when he returned in 1744-5, and he was not able to heal the divisions. Nor could he resurrect the old religious fervor, partly because of deep rents in the social and religious fabric and partly because of a new outbreak of war between the British and French empires.

[60] Caulkins, p. 391; Edwin P. Parker, History of the Second Church of Christ in Hartford (Hartford: Belknap and Warfield, 1892), p. 113.

PART III

RESULTS OF THE GREAT AWAKENING

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The Great Awakening profoundly stirred all of Connecticut life. It resulted first in the spiritual quickening of the churches. "Multitudes" professed conversion and were added to the churches. This quickening was followed by a new missionary concern and social improvement. There were also significant ecclesiological and theological changes. "Strict Congregationalists" pulled out from the establishment and formed Separate churches. Baptist and Anglican denominations benefited considerably from the confusion and added several churches each and many adherents. This proliferation of congregations outside the establishment contributed greatly to the weakening of the state church and to its ultimate disestablishment. Meanwhile something was happening to the theology of New England, both in terms of slight modification of the old Calvinsim and in terms of a rejection of some basic tenets of Calvinism in favor of unitarian and universalist tendencies. All of these effects of the Awakening are explored at some length in subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER VII

SPIRITUAL QUICKENING

A. Conversion

As Gaustad has observed, "The most immediate result of the revival was the making of new converts: this awakening power was sufficiently evident to win for the movement the name by which it is known."[1] What men of the Awakening meant by conversion experience is specifically defined by Pastor George Griswold of the second parish of Lyme (East Lyme), Connecticut, in his report to Thomas Prince, dated April 3, 1744: ". . . true Conversion is an inward Work of the Spirit of God, turning the Sinner from Darkness to Light, from Satan to God, and from Sin to Holiness: it brings the Heart to embrace Jesus Christ . . ."[2]

That "thousands" or "multitudes" were converted during the Awakening is as specific as many commentators on the revival care to get. Clark notes that some writers estimate as few as 10,000 were converted and cites Dexter as concluding that the figure properly should be 40,000 to 50,000.[3] Beardsley observes that the conclusions of careful historians range from 25,000 to 50,000.[4] These estimates are interesting and useful, but they

[1] Edwin S. Gaustad, The Great Awakening in New England (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1965; orig. pub., 1957), p. 103.

[2] Thomas Prince, Jr., The Christian History, II (1744), 110.

[3] George L. Clark, A History of Connecticut (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1914), p. 274.

[4] Frank G. Beardsley, A History of American Revivals (3d ed.; New York: American Tract Society, 1904), p. 64.

are from secondary sources. It may be more instructive to observe that the Killingly Declaration concluded that 30,000 or 40,000 were converted in New England in a period of two or three years, obviously 1740 to 1742 or 1743.[5] While the separatists gathered at Killingly in 1781 were not research experts, they had lived through the Great Awakening and had followed its developments avidly. Their testimony should not be taken lightly. The population of New England is generally assumed to have been around 300,000 in 1740.[6] If one accepts the smaller estimate of the Killingly Declaration, approximately ten per cent of the people of New England were converted during the Awakening. Connecticut's population was probably about 80,000-90,000 at the time or a little less than one third that of New England. Assuming that the Awakening had an approximately equal effect throughout New England, Connecticut should have had 8,000-9,000 professions of faith. But did it?

No known study has been made of Connecticut churches to determine whether this or any other approximation might be correct. Therefore it has been one of the aims of this investigation to find out how many people really were awakened in Connecticut as a result of the efforts of Whitefield and others. On the basis of a careful study of Trumbull's A Complete History of Connecticut and Contributions to the Ecclesiastical History of Connecticut and other indications, it has been concluded that there were 125 Congregational churches in Connecticut when Whitefield came through

[5] An Historical Narrative and Declaration . . . of Strict Congregational Churches . . . at Killingly . . . (Providence: Bennett Wheeler, 1781), p. 5.

[6] See, e. g., Clark, p. 274.

in 1740. In addition there were nine or more Anglican churches and three Baptist churches. Of the Congregational churches, records of eighty-three are known and have been read. Among these eighty-three records forty-two admissions lists were found, making it possible to discover how many professions of faith were made in approximately one third of the Congregational churches during the Great Awakening. In addition, indications of professions made in four other churches have been found in other sources. Records of only five Anglican churches are known to exist for part or all of the years 1740-1743. Four of these provide admissions lists. No Baptist church records are known to exist for this early period.

The use of these church records to determine how many had a conversion experience presents some very real problems. In the first place, many who had such an experience had been members in full communion with their churches for many years, according to An Account by Thomas Prince of Boston, covering the years 1740-43.[7] The names of such individuals would not reappear on the admission lists, and there is no way of tabulating this figure. Secondly, many who professed conversion were in the Half-Way Covenant category. Most churches specified when such persons made a profession of faith and were "admitted into full communion." But not all of them did. A full tabulation of Half-Way Covenant adherents and those admitted to full communion during the Great Awakening would show that many of the former group were transferred to the latter category on their profession of faith. Historian R. H. Gidman of the First Congregational Church of Preston, Connecticut, says that while the church there was

[7] Gaustad, p. 104.

greatly stirred during the revival, the irreligious people of the town were little affected.[8] One gets the impression that the same observation could be made about many other Connecticut towns. A very substantial number of conversions occurred among the Half-Way Covenant people. In other words, to a large extent those who were interested in religion and were somewhat prepared for a new religious experience were the ones who had such experiences in 1740-43. One is tempted to make a comparison here with present conditions. Reports coming out of the Billy Graham campaigns indicate that a very large proportion of those who make professions are already church members or have attended often. The irreligious frequently are little affected.

A third problem involved in using the church admissions records is that they do not always seem to be complete even where they do exist. A few churches where revival fires are known to have burned brightly show no evidence of the fact in the admissions records. For instance, Canterbury experienced a "stirring revival" in 1741 and 1742 and received ten members in 1743;[9] but there is no evidence of the fact in the church records, where it is reported that a total of twenty-one joined the fellowship 1740-1743 and many of those by letter from other churches.[10] In North Stonington the church records indicate that only three joined by

[8] R. H. Gidman, "The First Church in Preston, A Historical Survey," The Bi-Centennial Celebration of the First Congregational Church of Preston, Connecticut, 1698-1898 (Preston: Published by the Society, 1900), p. 27.

[9] C. C. Goen, Revivalism and Separatism in New England, 1740-1800 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), pp. 70-71.

[10] Records of the First Congregational Church, Canterbury, pp. 73-75.

profession of faith in 1742,[11] while Hurd reports that ninety-nine joined the church that year.[12] In this case and in two or three others, if there were not more additions to the church during the Great Awakening than the church records show, there would not be enough personnel to support the standing, separate, Baptist or other churches of the area. Perhaps the explanation for these omissions is that so many joined at one time the names were put in a special place in the record books and subsequently lost. In a few instances sections of admissions lists were separated in the record books for no known reason. Thus, the figures reported here must be taken as minimal.

The tabulation arrived at in this study is based almost entirely on church records in manuscript form on deposit in the Connecticut State Library and the Connecticut Historical Soceity. Where other sources have been used, proper notation appears in footnotes. Church records are listed in the bibliography. It is interesting to note that for the years 1740-43 a total of 3,226 joined the Congregational churches of Connecticut, almost all of them by profession of faith.[13] If one may assume that this cross-section of the churches of the colony can safely be projected to encompass the whole, it would then be possible to multiply this 3,226 (representing about one third of the established churches of the colony) by three to obtain a figure of over 9,000. The conclusion is, then, that ten per cent

[11] Records of the North Stonington Congregational Church, I, 17-19.

[12] D. Hamilton Hurd, History of New London County, Connecticut (Philadelphia: J. W. Lewis & Co., 1882), p. 732.

[13] Episcopal additions are not included in this figure because they came generally by transfer from Congregational churches.

or more of the population of Connecticut actually may have made professions of faith during the height of the Awakening. In such places as the first parish of Windham and the first parish of Lyme the percentage was considerably higher than ten per cent. The population of Windham was about 800 at the time,[14] and 114 professions of faith are recorded in the church records for the years 1741-43.[15] When Jonathan Parsons of the first parish of Lyme made his report on the revival to Thomas Prince, Jr., of Boston in May of 1744, he gave the population of his parish as 768 persons and concluded that 180 had "met with a saving change."[16] As the following chart shows, there were eleven churches in Connecticut whose records indicate over 100 admissions to membership by profession of faith during the years 1740-43. In almost all of these cases fifteen per cent of the population or more must have come into the church. The churches with their admissions are as follows. Five were in New London County: Franklin, 116; Lyme first parish, 180; Lyme second parish, 113; New London first parish, 104; North Stonington, 125. Four were located in Windham County: Hampton first parish, 132; Lebanon, 166; Pomfret, 106; Windham first parish, 114. There was one each in Hartford County (Suffield, 238) and Litchfield County (Woodbury, 112).

Other interesting observations come out of this tabulation. One that does not appear on the chart but is abundantly clear in the records themselves is that the height of the Awakening came during the summer of 1741 --and more specifically during the month of July. In a few instances the

[14] Goen, p. 80.

[15] Records of the First Congregational Church, Windham, I, 7.

[16] Prince, Christian History, II (1744), 122, 151.

peak of excitement was reached in 1742, but decline had definitely set in everywhere by 1743. There were approximately twice as many professions of faith in 1741 as in 1742 and about four times as many in 1742 as in 1743. The tabulation was run from 1733 to 1747 to make it possible to see where the height of the Awakening came. It would also show where the frontier revival of 1735 and 1736 struck. At least seventeen churches of those charted experienced at least moderate revivals in the earlier period, under the influence of Jonathan Edwards' ministry at Northampton. The church records always specified when an Indian, a negro or a mulatto was being admitted to the church. Two mulattoes and thirty negroes are included in the tabulation; twenty-three Indians are mentioned. The records do not mention special attention shown to negroes by preachers of the revival, but they do show some attention to the Indians. For instance, Pastor Griswold of the East Lyme parish sought to preach among the Indians in 1741 with no effect. But early in August of that year James Davenport preached among them and some apparently were converted; ultimately twenty made profession of faith in the area of Lyme.[17] As the chart shows, thirteen of these joined Griswold's church. A "considerable number" of Pequot Indians near Groton were converted in 1741 and subsequently about fifty regularly attended preaching services in Groton on into the year 1742.[18] More is said about missions to the Indians below. Exactly how many Indians and negroes lived in the colony at the time of the Awakening cannot be

[17] Prince, Christian History, II (1744), 113.

[18] Norris G. Osborn, History of Connecticut (New York: The States History Company, 1925), I, 338-39.

determined, but the census of 1756 showed 3,019 blacks and 617 Indians.[19] No doubt the former were less numerous in 1741 and the latter more numerous.

On the accompanying chart spaces are left blank where it is not known whether the record is complete. A zero is entered when no admissions were reported for that year; an "or" is entered under the year when a church was organized if organization occurred subsequent to 1733. An asterisk (*) indicates the figure includes one negro; a double asterisk (**) indicates the figure includes one Indian. In three instances where it is known only that a figure covers admissions received during the years 1741 and 1742, the figure is placed on the line between the two dates. In the tabulation at the bottom of the columns two thirds of those numbers are added into the 1741 column on the basis of the fact that there were twice as many admissions in 1741 as 1742.

[19] Charles J. Hoadly (ed.), The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut (Hartford: Case, Lockwood and Brainard, 1870), X, 618.

ADMISSIONS TO THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES OF CONNECTICUT

CHURCH	1733	1734	1735	1736	1737	1738	1739	1740	1741	1742	1743	1744	1745	1746	1747
Bethlehem							or	4	8	3	7	15	2	4	3
Bloomfield						or	9	2	13	10	5*	2	0	0	
Bolton	11	4	36	6	3	8	7	7	34	3	6	2	4	0	23[20]
Bozrah						or	12	4	23	13	2	6	1	0	1
Branford 1st	28	15	5	5	3	11	16	4	10	3	5	0	5	3	0
Canterbury 1st	15	2	5	10	14	9	8	9	3	7[21]	2	1	19	2	
Cheshire	19	8	23	11	12	7	7	15*	50	24	1	7	14	22	8
Colchester 1st	30	12	19	33	15	11	0	3	28	37	5	0	0	0	3
Colchester 2nd									4*	3	4	1	1	1	2
Cromwell						5	15	14	9*	16	5	2	1	0	2
East Haddam			2	4*	6	31	5	5	3	7	0	3	2	2	7
Franklin	3	2	14	21	8	2	16	10	68	33	5	1	0	0	0
Goshen	7	14	13	21	11	19	7	3	25	41	3	4	7*	2	3
Greenfield Hill	2	6	8	7	5	9	5	10	5	16	4	10	6	0	2
Griswold 1st			13	15	11	7	10	1	9	46	9*	1	0	3	1
Groton[22]									80						
Hampton 1st	2	6	13	12	6	7	8	8	53	66[23]	5[24]	4	4	5	10
Hartford 1st	17	3	4	5	5	16	3	3	27	5	4	1	1	3	0
Kent									40[25]	7	9	8	4	3	2
Killingly[26]										60					
Lebanon	15	15	28	20	28	13	6	10	95	52	9	7	12	13*	11
Lyme 2nd[27]										113					
Mansfield	11	14	85	19	8	8	7	9	31*	20*	0	11	1	19*	10
Milford	9	8	28	23	4	49	8	2	71	8*	1	1	0	1	3
Newent (Lisbon)									30*	5					
New Hartford[28]						or		7	5	5	1	1	2	0	2
New Haven 1st	6	18	45	56	36	20	13	10	28*	8	7	5	8	4	2
New London 1st	2	5	19	10	5	16	2	4	84*	12[29]	4	5**	4	1	
New Milford	3	12	11	8	7	8	16	7	22	7	3	5	0	0	0
North Stonington	14		10	4	2	13	10	9	15	99[30]	2	3**	1	2	2
Norwich	0	3	4	9	6	4	1	0	32	44	15	5	2	2	1
Old Lyme 1st	3	8	13	6	3	8	7	8	150	11	11*				

CHURCH	1733	1734	1735	1736	1737	1738	1739	1740	1741	1742	1743	1744	1745	1746	1747
Old Saybrook[31]				6	14	11	14	15	5	2	4	3	5	4	5
Pomfret[32]										106					
Preston		6	6	8	4	6	9	8	14[33]	2	0	6	4	1	1
Scotland			or						49						
Somers	4	6	27	4	6	2	1	8	29	38[34]	2	3	3	2	
Stonington 1st	3	6	13	10	4	5	2	2	16	19	2	0	0	0	1
Southington	13	1	5	18	9	0	3	3	28	11	4	4	7	5	2
Suffield	4	3	120	13	4	6	15	5*	176[35]	42*	15*	14	2	2	3
Voluntown-Sterling	2	0	9	10	9	5	0	4		1					
West Hartford	5	7	30	4	5	6	7	8	46	7*	0	3	2	7	0
Wethersfield	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	5	43	24	4	5	4	2	2
Windham 1st	6	11	21	25	20	17	13		69	31	14	1	4	5	1
Woodbury	7	8	13	10	13	14	33	19	45	40	8	4	0	2	3
Woodstock	7	10	3	0	0	26	13	25	16	11	15*	24	13	7	3
Totals	248	213	645	413	286	379	306	270	1822	932	202	178	145	129	119

ADMISSIONS TO THE EPISCOPAL CHURCHES OF CONNECTICUT

Christ Church, Stratford	10	17*	31	15**	2	1	12	17	6	24	30	14	21	9	14
Norwalk										38	19	11	4	4	
Ridgfield										12					
Stanford										6					

[20] Many of these are transfers and it is not clear from the records whether they all joined the church in 1747 or whether this list includes transfers for several years prior to and including 1747.

[21] All were transfers from other churches.

[22] Benjam Trumbull, A Complete History of Connecticut (New Haven: Maltby, Goldsmith and Co., 1818), II, 145.

[23] Includes one Indian and one negro.

[24] Includes two Indians.

[25] The church was incorporated in 1741 and ten men signed the church covenant. It is a question whether the forty additions of 1741 were incorporate members or those awakened during the revival. It seems that since only ten signed the covenant upon incorporation, many of these probably did not come out of the revival.

[26] Ellen D. Larned, History of Windham County, Connecticut (Worcester, Mass.: Published by the Author, 1874-80), I, 450.

[27] Prince, Christian History, II (1744), 109; includes 100 whites and 13 Indians.

[28] This was a small church with an estimated 29 members in 1739, which had grown to 85 members in 1761; Records of the New Hartford Congregational Church, I, 1.

[29] Includes one mulatto.

[30] The church records indicate only three admissions on profession of faith in 1742; Records of the North Stonington Congregational Church, I, 18. D. Hamilton Hurd (History of New London County, Connecticut (Philadelphia: J. W. Lewis & Co., 1882), p. 732) says the church received 99 members in 1742 and during the preceding nine years 65 members. Very likely Hurd is right. The area shared largely in the excitement of the Awakening; and if the church had not enjoyed large growth during the Awakening, there would not have been enough people to staff the standing church, a Separate church and a Baptist church, all of which existed there. The church admissions lists show 63 for the previous nine years as opposed to Hurd's 65. Sometimes admissions lists are fragmentary or partially lost.

[31] The pastor wrote tracts against Edwards and others and the church did not share in the Awakening.

[32] Larned, I, 444.

[33] Includes one mulatto.

[34] Includes four Indians.

[35] Includes five negroes.

B. Missionary Concern

As men became "new-lighted" during the Awakening, they sought to share their faith with others. Emphasizing obedience to the command of Christ to launch out into Jerusalem and Judea, they went about in their home towns and throughout Connecticut preaching the gospel.[36] Their ministry in Connecticut put a new emphasis on the Indian, and interest in the Indian led them out into various frontier areas of New England and New York--their Samaria. Taken up as they were with all of the excitement of the Awakening at home, including the establishment of Separate churches, there was little energy or resource for missions to the "uttermost part of the earth." Incirectly, however, foreign missions were spurred by the Great Awakening in Connecticut because Jonathan Edwards' account of the life of David Brainerd was instrumental in Henry Martyn's decision to go to India as a missionary in 1805. There he was active with William Carey and others in launching the modern missionary movement.[37]

Popular writers on the Great Awakening are sometimes so imbued with the importance of David Brainerd that they tend to magnify unduly his place in the history of missions among the American Indian. While he is probably the best known of the early missionaries to native Americans, he certainly was not the first. Soon after the beginnings of settlement in New England, the Society in London for Propagating the Gospel in New

[36] Acts 1:8.

[37] "Martyn, Henry," Britannica 14, 993.

England was formed. And in 1709 the Society for Promotion of Christian Knowledge was organized in Scotland; it was under the auspices of this organization that Brainerd conducted his missionary activity. Numerous individuals, too, had played an illustrious part in Indian evangelism in New England. One should not ignore Thomas Mayhew, Jr. and his descendants, Richard Bourne, John Eliot, Roger Williams, and John Cotton, to name a few of Brainerd's predecessors. The story of Indian missions in eighteenth-century New England likewise involves numerous individuals.[38]

Having said all this, one must still admit that religious work among the Indians of Connecticut and especially on the frontiers of New England had been spotty. So when revival flames warmed the hearts of Connecticut men, they sought to minister to their tawny neighbors. George Griswold, pastor of the East Lyme church (second parish of Lyme), preached to the Indians near his parish in the spring of 1741 but without success. Although James Davenport is commonly portrayed as a disruptive influence among the whites of Connecticut, he apparently had a real interest in the Indians and preached to them in various places, including Lyme and New London. From the ministry at the former a score or more of "Neantick Indians" were converted;[39] and at the latter Samson Occum, one of the most outstanding Indian converts of all New England, made a profession of faith. Nathanael Eells of Stonington and his neighbor, Joseph Parks of Westerly, just across the border in Rhode Island, had great success in their preaching missions among the Narragansett Indians. At least

[38] See Edward P. Johnson, "Christian Work Among the North American Indians During the Eighteenth Century," Papers of the American Society of Church History, 2d Ser., 6 (1921), 1-43.

[39] Prince, Christian History, II (1744), 113.

fifty-four Indians were converted on the Rhode Island side of the line, and some of those converted on the Connecticut side themselves became missionaries to other Indians in Rhode Island.[40] Between Stonington and New London stood the town of Groton, where the revival also stirred the Indians profoundly. There thirty Pequot Indians, apparently converts, were now so eager to learn to read the Bible and other literature that a group of New Lights of Groton sent a memorial to the General Court on May 6, 1742, appealing for help in educating the Indians of their area.[41] Farther north, in South Killingly, Samuel Wadsworth, pastor of the Separate Church there (1747-62) brought some of the remaining Indians of the area into the church during his ministry.[42]

Just as the excitement of the Awakening was greatest in the two eastern counties of Connecticut, interest in the religious needs of the Indians was greatest there. Most of what has been said about work among the Indians concerned New London County. The chief center of Indian work in Windham County was at Lebanon, where Rev. Eleazar Wheelock was the minister. A great friend of the Awakening, Wheelock had preached in many places on its behalf. As the religious fervor declined and he was more free, Wheelock became interested in the Indians whom he felt had been shamefully neglected. Actually, his concern for the Indians came about indirectly through his labors as a teacher of youth. In his desire to prepare young men for college and the ministry, he began taking them into

[40] Prince, Christian History, II (1744), 23; I (1743), 201-10.

[41] Osborn, pp. 338-39.

[42] Richard M. Bayles (ed.), History of Windham County (New York: W. W. Preston and Co., 1889), p. 943.

his own home. In December, 1743, he welcomed a Mohegan Indian by the name of Samson Occum, then about nineteen. He had been converted at New London about two years earlier. Thus began Indian training that would lead to the founding of Dartmouth. Occum studied for three years with Wheelock and then spent another year studying with Wheelock's brother-in-law, Benjamin Pomeroy at Hebron. The London Board of Commissioners in Boston helped to support Occum during his years of study. Subsequently he was licensed to preach by the Windham Association and in 1759 was ordained by the Suffolk Presbytery on Long Island, to be employed on a mission to the Mohawk and Oneida Indians.[43] Wheelock viewed Occum as a specimen of what might be accomplished in "forming the minds of the heathen." And he was convinced that Indians would be more successful than whites in preaching among the Indians.

Wheelock's motives in ministering to the Indians were threefold. 1. Christians were under obligation to spread the gospel to the heathen; New England was scourged by them because of failure to evangelize them. 2. He expressed pity for their miserable condition. 3. There was a political advantage to carrying on missionary work among them; they would be "good subjects of our government" if Christianized.[44] Wheelock's plan of evangelism was to persuade Indian parents to send their children to him for education, to be instructed in principles of religion and arts of civilized life. He would keep them a number of years until they were qualified to teach their people. It was not Wheelock's thought to provide

[43] David M' Clure and Elijah Parish (eds.), Memoirs of the Rev. Eleazar Wheelock, D. D. (Newburyport, Mass.: Edward Little & Co., 1811), p. 16.

[44] M' Clure and Parish, p. 17.

the Indians with a minimal education; he wanted the Indian trainees to be "equal with their English brethren in every useful attainment." The plan comprehended education of female children by placing them in Christian families or under the care of governesses to be instructed in domestic arts. In addition Wheelock wanted to educate a number of promising English youth as missionaries among the Indians.[45]

Wheelock did not receive very much encouragement from other ministers in whom he confided his aspirations. But he went forward as effectively as he could. In 1754 Joshua Moor, a respectable farmer in Mansfield, made the first considerable donation: a house (to serve as dormitory) and two acres of land contiguous to Wheelock's home. In consequence the school was named Moor's Indian Charity School.[46] On December 18 of that year, two Indians of the Delaware tribe (John Pumpshire and Jacob Woolley) were sent by Rev. John Brainerd (brother of David), missionary among them, on request of Wheelock. Pumpshire's health would not stand the rigors of sedentary school life and he had to return home, but Woolley did well and went on to the College of New Jersey. At Wheelock's request Brainerd sent two other Delawares later.

Meanwhile private subscriptions were given in the amount of 500 pounds,[47] and in 1763 the General Court of Massachusetts became Wheelock's patron. He also organized his venture with Elisha Williams, former rector

[45] M' Clure and Parish, p. 19.

[46] M' Clure and Parish, p. 24.

[47] George Whitefield was instrumental in obtaining part of this amount in England. The evangelist had considerable interest in missionary work among the Indians and watched closely the success of Wheelock's work; Luke Tyerman, The Life of the Reverend George Whitefield (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1876), II, 474.

of Yale, Samuel Mosely of Windham and Benjamin Pomeroy of Hebron associated with him as trustees. The school had great trials during the French and Indian War, but "Those tribes, among whom his missionaries and school masters had mostly labored were friendly to the colonies, and generally observed neutrality in the wars with the French, and since, in the late revolutionary wars with Great Britain."[48] In spite of the problems of the war, in 1762 Wheelock had over twenty youth under his care, and these were chiefly Indians.[49]

One of the most outstanding white missionaries to be trained by Wheelock was Samuel Kirkland of Norwich, Connecticut. While preparing for college at Lebanon he of course associated with the Indian students and caught a vision of missionary work among them. After finishing college at Princeton, he became a missionary to Indians in the vicinity of Clinton, New York, and rendered outstanding service there for over four decades.[50] Kirkland ranks as one of the truly great missionaries to North American Indians. On the political scene he is no doubt best known for his important part in securing a declaration of neutrality from the Six Nations at the outbreak of the American Revolution. It is beyond the purview of the present study to detail the history of Moor's School, its transfer to Hanover, New Hampshire, and its reincorporation as Dartmouth College. The full significance of Wheelock's devoted ministry on behalf of the American Indian is yet to be told.

[48] M' Clure and Parish, p. 26.

[49] William Allen (ed.), "Memoir of Rev. Eleazar Wheelock, D. D.," American Quarterly Register, X (1837), p. 19.

[50] Johnson, p. 27.

Thanks to Jonathan Edwards, the name of David Brainerd is even better known than that of Eleazar Wheelock in the annals of missionary history. Brainerd was born in 1718 at Haddam, Hartford County, of an illustrious family. His father was an assistant or member of the upper house of Connecticut, and his brothers became outstanding members of their community. Hezekiah Brainerd was a justice of the peace and a representative from Haddam to the Assembly. Nehemiah Brainerd pastored the church at Eastbury, Connecticut, and John succeeded David as missionary to the Indians. During the winter of 1738 and on into 1739 David went through a great spiritual struggle, having a conversion experience on July 12, 1739. In September he went to Yale and had a very severe case of the measles in the spring of 1740; seemingly this so weakened his system that it contributed to his affliction with tuberculosis. As early as August of 1740 he had become so weak from too much study that he was advised by his tutor to go home. On this occasion he said, "I was grown so weak that I began to spit blood."[51] From this point on it seems that Brainerd was a dying man. But he determined to live a useful life. In June, 1740, he had a spiritual experience during which he said, ". . . my soul dearly loved all mankind, and longed exceedingly that they should enjoy what I enjoyed."[52]

Thus it turned out that Brainerd's missionary concern and his knowledge that he was a sick man came in close proximity in time. Returning to Yale on November 6, Brainerd was caught up in the "general awakening"

[51] Jonathan Edwards, An Account of the Life of the Late Reverend Mr. David Brainerd (Edinburgh: William Gray, 1765), p. 15.

[52] Edwards, p. 15.

that spread itself over the college in late February. During the following winter while in the third year of college he was expelled for attending a separate meeting in New Haven once after having been forbidden by the rector to do so and for having made a statement about Tutor Whittlesey to the effect that he had no more grace than a chair.[53] Then Brainerd went to live with Jedidiah Mills at Ripton to study with him and fit himself for the work of the ministry.

Beginning with an entry in his Diary on April 19, 1742, Brainerd made several references to his concern for conversion of the heathen;[54] these culminated in his invitation to appear in New York on November 25 to be examined by representatives of the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge. This body accepted him and commissioned him to work among Indians living near the forks of the Delaware River. Since the worst days of the winter were no time for him to begin his ministry, the Society did not urge him to leave for his term of service immediately. When he was ready to go in March he was given new directions to go to Indians in the woods of New York between Stockbridge and Albany because of a contention between whites and Indians around the forks of the Delaware.[55] Meanwhile, on July 29, 1742, an association of ministers had licensed him to preach at Danbury in northern Fairfield County.[56] Brainerd

[53] Edwards, p. 20.

[54] These included preaching to Indians near Kent on the western border of Connecticut on August 12. On that occasion he reported that some of the Indians cried out in deep distress over their spiritual condition; Edwards, p. 38.

[55] Edwards, pp. 51-64.

[56] Edwards, p. 37.

was kindly received by his Indians in April, 1743, and launched into a successful ministry among them. But his season among them was fraught with many difficulties. He was plagued with several bouts of illness, suffered terribly from exposure during the hard winter of 1743-44, and endured great disappointment in his efforts to effect reconciliation with Yale officials and obtain his degree. Finally they agreed to permit him to come back and take his degree after twelve more months of studies at the college, but he felt that he should not leave his ministry.

In spite of all his trials, Brainerd continued his ministry and on April 5, 1744, met with the Commissioners to request transfer to the Delawares because he felt he had done his work in New York.[57] The Society granted him his wish, but he had hardly reached the forks and begun to get settled when the Society called him back to Newark for his ordination, which took place on June 12, 1744.[58] After fourteen months at the Forks of the Delaware, Brainerd moved a few miles down the Delaware to Crossweeksung (Crosswicks), New Jersey, about nine miles southeast of Trenton and about nineteen miles northeast of Philadelphia. Among the Indians of this region the missionary was to live from June 19, 1745, to March 20, 1747, and here he was to have his great triumph. A revival broke out among the Indians and their whole way of life changed. He reported baptizing seventy-seven of them during the first eleven months there.[59] But at last Brainerd could minister no longer. The rigors to

[57] Edwards, p. 106.

[58] Edwards, p. 113.

[59] Sereno E. Dwight (ed.), Memoirs of the Rev. David Brainerd (New Haven: S. Converse, 1822), p. 328.

which he had subjected himself among the Indians would have killed a healthy man, to say nothing of one suffering with tuberculosis. A modern mission board would never have sent him out at all, much less permitting him to continue after his condition became serious.

On March 20, 1747, Brainerd left his beloved Indians never to return. When he returned to New England, Jonathan Edwards invited him to live at his home. And finally, after several difficult months, Brainerd died on October 9, 1747. He left in the hands of his beloved host all of his papers, which Edwards subsequently published as the Life and Diary of David Brainerd. Readers of the literary efforts of David Brainerd have often felt that he was one of earth's holiest men, but they have been repulsed at times by his morbid introspection. If one takes into account the severe illness from which Brainerd almost constantly suffered, however, he will understand in part why the missionary was often so melancholy. A clue to this effect appears in a note by S. E. Dwight in his edition of Brainerd's Memoirs: "This week, at least the former part of it, he was in a very weak state, but yet seems to have been free from melancholy, which often had attended the failing of his bodily strength."[60]

Perhaps the life and literary endeavors of Brainerd were instrumental in Edwards' decision to minister to the Indians himself. When trouble broke out at Northampton and Edwards' congregation was in the process of dismissing him, a dual invitation came to the great revivalist. One was from the white congregation in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, and the other from the Commissioners at Boston and the Society in London for Propagating

[60] Dwight, p. 314.

the Gospel in New England to become missionary to the Housatonics there. Edwards spent the rest of the winter at Stockbridge, beginning in January, 1751; and in the spring he accepted the invitation. When he went to Stockbridge, his Indian congregation numbered 250. A school had also been established there for instruction of Indian children.[61]

Thus, sons of Connecticut played their part in a new missionary thrust among America's original inhabitants, a thrust that was an outgrowth of the Great Awakening. New Light Eleazar Wheelock caught his vision of ministering to the Indians and establishing a school for their training while teaching Samson Occum, an Indian convert of the Awakening. New Light David Brainerd became the best known of all the missionaries to American Indians as a result of his works published by Jonathan Edwards. His brother John would pick up the torch he laid down in New Jersey. And Jonathan Edwards, himself a son of Connecticut and great leader of the Awakening, produced some of his best theological works while ministering to Indians at the frontier town of Stockbridge, Massachusetts. These were the stellar lights but other sons of Connecticut also preached the Gospel to their tawny brethren. An example of the lesser lights was Benajah Case, an ardent New Light graduate of Yale. He preached to the Indians in northwestern Connecticut for a while in 1742 before accepting the pastorate of the New Fairfield Congregational Church.[62]

[61] Sereno E. Dwight, The Life of President Edwards (New York: G. & C. & H. Carvill, 1830), p. 449.

[62] Franklin B. Dexter, Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale College, 1701-1745 (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1885), I, 475-76.

C. Social Improvement

Promoters of revival commonly cite as one of its great values the moral improvement of society. And there are numerous claims that this in fact occurred during the Great Awakening. Referring to this revival, Hoffman asserts, "The moral life of the colonies, too, was much improved. Higher moral standards prevailed everywhere. The drunkenness, frivolity and licentiousness which had prevailed in former days was diminished . . ."[63] Indications of the power of the revival in social improvement also appear in eighteenth century Connecticut records. The Separatists who met at Killingly in 1781 wistfully looked back on the blessed days of the Awakening and testified, "The Diversions and Vanities of People were in general laid aside, such as Tavern-haunting, Gaming, Dancing, Horse-racing, Chambering and Wantonness. . ."[64] A report by Rev. Jonathan Parsons of Lyme to Thomas Prince of Boston in 1744 claimed that the whole demeanor of Lyme had been changed by the revival.[65] Rev. George Griswold of East Lyme, reported in the same year that conversions among the Indians of that region had resulted in a decline of drinking and a greater interest in religion among them.[66] A report to the General Court of Connecticut, dated May 6, 1742, stated that as a result of a revival among the Pequot Indians of Groton the previous year, ". . . they are Generally Reformed as

[63] Fred W. Hoffman, Revival Times in America (Boston: W. A. Wilde Co., 1956), p. 61.

[64] Killingly Declaration, p. 3.

[65] Prince, Christian History, II (1744), 146.

[66] Prince, Christian History, II (1744), 113.

to their beloved Sin of Drunkeness, and behave with an unusual Sobriety and Decency."[67] In speaking of social effects of the revival in the town of New Haven and at Yale, Jonathan Edwards commented, ". . . society was greatly reformed, the students in general became serious, and many of them remarkably so. . ."[68] Miss Larned reported that several of the remaining Indians in South Killingly, once so disorderly and troublesone, were converted during the revival and reformed their lives and united with the Separate Church there.[69]

Other pastors and laymen of Connecticut and Massachusetts made similar claims, but the modern student wants more than general statements by pious supporters of the Awakening. He would like to know if the crime rate decreased significantly in areas most affected by the revival. He would like to know if there were fewer fights and other breaches of the peace. The only way to arrive at knowledge of this sort in Connecticut is to make extensive tabulations of cases brought before the local town courts. While the county court did handle serious cases, it did not hear the wide variety of petty offenses against society brought before the county court in a colony like Virginia. Unfortunately, records of the town courts of Connecticut's colonial period are now being collected at Middletown for proper processing and arrangement. It will be some time before this process is complete and these records are available for research. Therefore, specific questions about social effects of the Great Awakening will have to go unanswered for the moment.

[67] Osborn, p. 339.

[68] Edwards, p. 17.

[69] Larned, I, 451.

CHAPTER VIII

FRACTURED ESTABLISHMENT: THE SEPARATE MOVEMENT (A) THE CHURCHES

The Great Awakening in Connecticut shook the churches of the colony to their very foundations. As was true with all other such great revivals, this one was attended with intense excitements and disorders. Members of the households of faith were brought face to face in strenuous contention for and against the new methods. Given the fanaticism of James Davenport, the censoriousness of George Whitefield and more especially of his followers, and the almost equally vitriolic verbiage of the conservative establishment, rending of the whole religious framework of the colony seemed inevitable.

Exactly how many churches split and how many separatist churches organized probably never will be known. Numerous temporary separations occurred but the people involved either repented of their actions as being too hasty or lacked the perseverance or dedication to construct a new church organization and call a minister. Examples of such temporary separations occurred in the Goshen church (Lebanon third parish) in New London County and at Coventry in Windham County.[1] Probably at least a dozen churches in the colony were afflicted with these unpleasant temporary rifts. Let it not be assumed, however, that squabbles in Connecticut churches all came over the Great Awakening. Even a cursory study of Connecticut ecclesiastical history will demonstrate that churchmen of the colony were

[1] C. C. Goen, Revivalism and Separatism in New England, 1740-1800 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), pp. 302-303.

a cantankerous lot, feuding over where to locate new churches, whom to call as pastor and a host of other issues. Because of the organization of the populace into ecclesiastical societies by parishes, some of the church affairs were controlled by the community as a whole and the concerns of the community became involved in the politics of the church. Often the ill will existing in the whole body politic was carried over into church affairs. As Bushman observes, "The church became the battleground for all the issues dividing the town. Persons of high standing in the community often were involved in discipline cases along with the less reputable, and then all the animosities that centered on them for economic and social reasons focused on the church."[2]

The number of separate churches fully organized is commonly given as "more than thirty."[3] But the construction of an authoritative list of all these churches and even the briefest history of them is virtually impossible. The highly reliable Contributions to the Ecclesiastical History of Connecticut mentions twenty-eight separatist churches that were organized and led by a pastor.[4] S. Leroy Blake in his very useful study on the

[2] See the unpublished dissertation (Harvard, 1960) by Richard L. Bushman, "Government and Society in Connecticut, 1690-1760," p. 249.

[3] See for example Mary H. Mitchell, The Great Awakening and Other Revivals in the Religious Life of Connecticut (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934), p. 17. Trumbull's statement that there were ten or twelve churches of this denomination in Connecticut is totally unacceptable to anyone who knows the literature in the field; Benjamin Trumbull, A Complete History of Connecticut (New Haven: Maltby, Goldsmith and Co., 1818, II, 538. Tracy follows Trumbull; Joseph Tracy, The Great Awakening (Boston: Tappan and Dennet, 1842), p. 324.

[4] Contributions to the Ecclesiastical History of Connecticut (New Haven: William L. Kingsley, 1861), pp. 254-59.

separate churches names thirty such churches.[5] Goen in his Appendix lists about forty organized separatist churches. Because he is so largely concerned with groups of Baptists, it is not easy, however, to discover whether all of these forty are splits from established Congregational churches or whether some of them are Baptist groups organized by missionaries of that denomination who have come in from the outside. Goen discusses only twenty-two separate churches as illustrations of the general situation in the colony.[6] Lavengood considers an estimate of twenty-five to thirty separate churches to be on the liberal side.[7] The fact that Backus listed seventeen separatist pastors in Connecticut up to 1752 does not provide an accurate guide to the number of churches because several of the churches could not afford to settle pastors of any kind.[8] Miss Caulkins said that twenty to thirty separate churches were organized in eastern Connecticut.[9] Exhaustive studies of church records and secondary sources have made it possible to describe at least briefly twenty-nine separatist churches organized in Connecticut during the Great Awakening. As noted in the subsequent discussion, it is questionable whether one or two of these should be included. Other Strict Congregational Churches

[5] S. Leroy Blake, The Separates or Strict Congregationalists of New England (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1902), pp. 140-96.

[6] Goen, pp. 302-309; 68-90.

[7] See the unpublished dissertation (Chicago, 1953) by Lawrence G. Lavengood, "The Great Awakening and New England Society," p. 293.

[8] Isaac Backus, A History of New England (Newton, Mass.: Backus Historical Society, 1871), II, 78-9.

[9] Frances M. Caulkins, History of Norwich, Connecticut (Hartford: Friends of the Author, 1874), p. 322.

were founded in Connecticut near the end of the eighteenth century and some (such as Goen) include them in their tabulation, but it seems that they are not connected with the Awakening. It is always possible that other churches were founded; but if so, their very memory has been virtually blotted out.

Churches in New London County

New London. Being a warm friend of the revival was no guarantee that a pastor could hold all of his New Light congregation, as events at New London were to prove. Gilbert Tennent preached three times at New London March 30, 1741, and four times the next day. Fires of religious enthusiasm burned brightly during the summer of that year with eighty making professions of faith and joining the First Congregational Church. Unfortunately, in the midst of revival a controversy disturbed the church and only four more professions of faith were recorded for the last quarter of the year.[10]

But Pastor Eliphalet Adams did not handle the rupture like other ministers of the colony. There were no appeals to political or ecclesiastical authority in an effort to force the malcontents to heel. First he called in Jonathan Parsons from the Lyme First Church in June. Parsons preached several times in New London and engaged in a number of private conferences in an effort to heal the division. He was less than successful and later wrote: "The Success was not according to my Wishes. I found

[10] Frances M. Caulkins, History of New London, Connecticut (New London: H. D. Utley, 1895), p. 454.

mutual rising Jealousies . . . . These Difficulties increas'd afterwards; and for want of Charity and mutual Condescension and Forbearance, they have produc'd an open Separation."[11] In 1742 Mr. Adams invited David Brainerd, an avowed New Light, to preach for him, again to no avail. About 100 separated themselves from Adams' congregation and formed a separate church. The reasons they gave for withdrawing were "deadness of the church" and "legal preaching."[12] Certainly neither of these charges was true at New London, but probably the services were not as emotional as the separatists wanted.

Still Pastor Adams retained his composure. His good sense, calm judgment and peace-loving character would yet save the church from fatal rupture. There is no record of the seceders in New London having been disciplined. And the County Court even qualified the separates as a church, to hold meetings and worship together without molestation. Blake thinks this action may have come as early as July, 1742,[13] but the date seems a little early because it was not until November 29, 1742, that five of the most prominent members of Mr. Adams' congregation absented themselves from communion: John Curtis, Christopher and John Christophers, and John and Peter Harris.[14]

The group at first met alternately at the homes of these leaders and finally settled on the house of Samuel Harris as a permanent meeting place,

[11] Letter to Thomas Prince, dated April 14, 1744, in The Christian History, II (1744), 143.

[12] S. Leroy Blake, The Later History of the First Church of Christ, New London, Connecticut (New London: The Day Publishing Co., 1900), p. 120.

[13] Blake, Separates, p. 145.

[14] Caulkins, New London, p. 452.

and it was fitted up for the society. Whether or not Blake is right, the separatists did hold services on week nights long before they took the fateful step of withdrawal from the church. And by early July Rev. Timothy Allen, who had been dismissed from his pastorate in New Haven for New Light views, had come to New London and was holding services in private homes.[15] He also stayed at Samuel Harris' home, which became known as The Shepherd's Tent and in the upper part of which was held an academy for educating young men to be exhorters, teachers and ministers. Usually meetings at The Shepherd's Tent were orderly but sometimes they were a confusion of praying, singing and exhorting all going on together. Of course the Connecticut Legislature would brook no opposition to Yale College or an established and educated clergy, so in October, 1742, it passed an act prohibiting establishment or maintenance of any private or unlicensed school.[16] The separatist academy was driven into Rhode Island, where it expired at an early date. While in New Haven it had fourteen students at its height.[17]

Against this background must be evaluated the James Davenport episode already described in Chapter IV. On March 6, 1743 he staged his bonfire of vanities, including books of highly respected divines, showing to what extremes the lunatic fringe could go. With the dying embers of the fire passions cooled. In the midst of the reaction the prorevival ministers

[15] "Diary of Joshua Hempstead of New London, Connecticut," Proceedings of the New London County Historical Society, I (1901), 395.

[16] Charles J. Hoadly (ed.), The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut (Hartford: Case, Lockwood and Brainard, 1870), VIII, 475.

[17] Goen, p. 63.

of the area called a council at the house of Mr. Adams on March 30 to deal with the question of the disorders. Those present were Edwards of Northampton, Williams of Lebanon, Lord of Norwich, Meacham of Coventry, Pomeroy of Hebron, Bellamy of Woodbury, Rossiter of Stonington and the younger Buel of Coventry. On the following day Edwards preached against prevailing disorders caused by enthusiasm, after which the crowd adjourned to the courthouse where the actors in the bonfire scene were put on trial for profaning the Sabbath (March 6 had been on Sunday). The case was continued to April 5 when the leaders, including Timothy Allen, were fined five shillings each and costs.[18]

Allen left New London after the fire, and separatists there never seem to have found a leader after that.[19] That their spirit did not flag immediately, however, is testified to by a letter written by Samuel Seabury, rector of St. James in New London, June 5, 1743:

> These people have their meetings in New London almost every night or day, and it is not uncommon (as I am apprized by persons of good sense and integrity) to see ten or more seized at once with violent agitations, many incapable of any decency, crying out for their damned estates, so past speaking at all, or so much as being unable to stand, fall down, as they pretend, with the weight of their guilt; and the most of those continuing thus, violently exercised (as they say, with conviction) . . .[20]

Christopher and John Christophers came back to Adams, who baptized a child

[18] Caulkins, New London, p. 456.

[19] Allen made his peace with the New Haven Association in 1748 and later reentered the Congregational ministry, pastoring the second church in Ashford 1757-64. He also served churches in New Jersey and Massachusetts, where he died in 1806 at the age of 90; Franklin B. Dexter, Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale College, 1701-1745 (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1885), I, 551-55.

[20] Blake, Later History of the First Church, p. 122.

for each of them in 1750.[21] Most of the rest of the seceders also had returned to the standing church by that time. A few, with Nathan Howard as leader, adopted Baptist principles and in 1748 organized a Baptist church in the western part of New London, now Waterford. Thus ended the separate movement in New London.[22]

Norwich. Powerfully affected by the revival, the Norwich area was also a hotbed of radicalism. In all five parishes of the town (nine miles square) separatist churches gathered. Their total number was considerable and at one period they even out-voted the standing regular church.[23] The separatist spirit began in the First Church, where Benjamin Lord was pastor. It seems strange that such would have been the case because Lord was regarded as an earnest evangelical preacher with an impressive delivery. Moreover, in February of 1744 a majority of the congregation had voted acceptance of the Cambridge Platform of 1648 and denial of the right of Lord to attend Consociation meetings of the county. Thus the church had virtually made itself independent.[24] Probably the main issue over which the church divided concerned whether or not church members must have a conversion experience to be admitted to full communion. In January, 1745, the majority of the church declared that such was desirable but not necessary.[25] The following month thirteen members of

[21] Blake, Later History of the First Church, p. 132.

[22] Goen, p. 70.

[23] Caulkins, Norwich, 195.

[24] Records of the First Congregational Church of Norwich, II, 47-9.

[25] Edwin S. Gaustad, The Great Awakening in New England (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1965; orig. pub., 1957), p. 115.

Lord's congregation (including the historian Isaac Backus) seceded from Lord's congregation and began to hold meetings at the home of Hugh Calkins. The other leader of the group was Jedidiah Hyde. In July the church appointed a committee to meet with the separatists and to summon them to the church to air the matter. A second summons was issued the seceders on September 10 and finally the church voted on October 17 to suspend the group.[26]

Reasons given by the separatists for leaving included (1) conversion was not required for communion, (2) coldness of preaching, (3) lack of church discipline, and (4) laymen were debarred from the privilege of exhortation and prayer.[27] At Bean Hill the separatists erected a plain but respectable house of worship. They organized with thirty male members and ordained Jedidiah Hyde as their minister October 30, 1747. Hyde's ministry was plagued with discord and he was deposed September 22, 1757. Two years later John Fuller was called from the Lyme Separate Church but fared little better than Hyde and lasted only two years. An excellent man and a good preacher, Fuller reunited with the established church and settled at Plainfield. Gamaliel Reynolds was ordained pastor over the Bean Hill church December 27, 1762, and four years later embraced Baptist principles and was baptized. The church then gradually scattered (most of them returning to Lord's congregation) and Reynolds held his last communion in 1782. The remnant continued to hold meetings until

[26] Records of Norwich First Church, I, 37.

[27] Records of Norwich First Church, I, 47-8.

1788 when they assembled as universalists.[28] Jedidiah Morse, later the famous geographer, ran a female academy in the meeting house after the church died.[29]

The situation in the second parish of Norwich (West Farms, later Franklin) illustrates how the controversies related to the revival often simply refocused earlier squabbles. Here in the 1730s bitter disputes arose over construction of the meeting house. With the coming of the Awakening the social and religious fissures created earlier remained, now under a new ecclesiastical guise. Thomas Denison gathered the malcontents into a separatist church in 1746 and for his pains was ordained their pastor on October 29 of that year. He continued in office until 1759, after which the church died.[30] The remnant of the congregation sold the meeting house in 1784.

Similar disputes agitated Pastor Kirkland's church in the third parish of Norwich (Newent, later Lisbon). Separatism appeared in the parish at least as early as November, 1745, for on November 12 the minutes of the Newent church record reasons that a Joseph Safford had given for separating from the church. He objected that the church organization was unscriptural, that the church did not insist on converted membership and that it held to the Half-Way Covenant. On January 17, 1746, reasons of other separating members were considered. In general, the group felt there was a lack of edification in the standing church and that there was more

[28] Records of Norwich First Church, I, 50-51.

[29] Blake, Separates, p. 161.

[30] Blake, Separates, p. 168.

edification in the separate meetings, that the church in words professed Christ but in works denied him, and that the church admitted members who "could not say that Christ was formed in them . . ." Of special interest is the fact that among those leaving the standing church was Thomas, a negro, who alleged that the church had separated from the truth and from God.[31]

Of course the church denied the validity of all separatist reasons; one of the separatists made a confession and was restored to fellowship. Two others recanted and went separatist again. Finally after five years of wrangling on December 6, 1750, fifteen separatists were cut off the church roll.[32] The date 1750 is usually given as the year of incorporation of the separatist church. Jeremiah Tracy, Jr., one of the group, was chosen to preach and administer ordinances; but apparently he was never ordained. Bliss Willoughby was called in 1753 to succeed Tracy.

In 1761 nearly all the members of the Newent Separate Church emigrated to Bennington, Vermont, where they gathered again as a church and became identified with the regular Congregational church. Some of those remaining in Norwich joined other separate churches; others joined the Brunswick Church, which drew up a new covenant abrogating the Half-Way Covenant. Thus the separate movement came to an end in Newent.[33]

In "Preston Long Society" (fourth parish, Norwich) there was a separation over which Jonathan Storey was ordained May 20, 1750. Miss Caulkins

[31] Records of the Newent Congregational Church (Lisbon), I, 29.

[32] Records of the Newent Church, I, 33.

[33] Blake, Separates, p. 156.

was not sure that the church was fully organized.[34] At any rate, the church fellowship met for thirteen years, at the end of which time the remaining members scattered among neighboring separate churches, being commended "to any Church they were minded to join with of the same Constitution."[35]

Separatists also gathered a small church in the fifth parich of Norwich, formerly called Norwich Plains, or familiarly Leffingwell-town, now the southeast part of Bozrah. The movement was of short duration, but it is probably over this group that Bliss Willoughby exercised pastoral oversight beginning in 1756.[36] Apparently this fellowship went over to the Baptists because in this place a small Baptist church was formed, chiefly through the efforts of Elder Zadok Darrow of Waterford. That Baptist fellowship was recognized by the New London Baptist Association in 1789 and the next year Peter Rogers was ordained its elder. The church lasted for twelve years and then expired.[37]

North Stonington. Joseph Fish became pastor of the North Stonington church in 1732, a fellowship which at the time consisted of thirty-nine members. A factional spirit had divided the church for some time; in fact, it was so bad that it had prevented the settlement of two men before him who had accepted calls to this pastorate. Fish's church shared

[34] Caulkins, Norwich, p. 321.

[35] Blake, Separates, p. 195.

[36] Blake, Separates, p. 195.

[37] Caulkins, Norwich, p. 598.

greatly in the Great Awakening, receiving ninety-nine new members in 1742 alone, as opposed to a total of sixty-five for the previous nine years.[38]

Apparently the tone of piety had been low and scandalous offenses numerous in the parish. Then came the Awakening, which some attributed to the Holy Spirit and others to the Devil. The judicious pastor tried to avoid outbursts of feeling and irregularity, but he was no match for James Davenport when he came through the community. "That wandering star which shot across the moral horizon, carrying desolation in its course" believed himself especially commissioned to call out true believers from the old churches and form a pure church, pastored by ministers who were converted and who were not hypocrites. While Fish was distinguished for his consistent piety, he did not approve of blind zeal and a disorganizing spirit. That was Fish's undoing, and he himself concluded that some two thirds of his church seceded.[39]

Some of these separatists formed a Separate or Strict Congregational Church on September 11, 1746, and ordained as their pastor on December 10 of that year Matthew Smith. The membership roster for that year listed a total of thirty-one.[40] Smith was excommunicated in 1749, and after several years without a pastor, the group chose Elder Oliver Prentice of the congregation to be pastor in 1753. Prentice died in office two years

[38] D. Hamilton Hurd, History of New London County, Connecticut (Philadelphia: J. W. Lewis and Co., 1882), p. 732.

[39] Joseph Fish, The Church of Christ a Firm and Durable House (New London: Timothy Green, 1767), p. iii.

[40] Records of the Separate or Strict Congregational Church in North Stonington, no page numbers.

later. After another period without leadership, the congregation called Nathan Avery, who served them from 1759 until his death in 1780. The next pastor was Christopher Avery, 1786-1819. In 1827 the separatist church absorbed the regular church, which by this time had been without a stated pastor for thirty-six years.

The standing church had not been prosperous since the days of the Awakening, receiving only seventeen members by profession of faith from 1743 to 1781 when Fish died. Meanwhile, the separatist church grew slowly, to forty-three in 1754 and seventy-five in 1804 and then declined early in the nineteenth century. The combined membership of the two churches was sixty when they merged in 1827.[41] It is clear that the Baptists of North Stonington were growing at the expense of the Congregationalists. A Baptist church was organized in the town in 1743, which grew to a membership of ninety-seven in 1784 and 154 in 1792. A second Baptist church was organized in 1765, which soon also became a congregation of "respectable numbers."[42]

North Groton. In North Groton (now Ledyard) a separate society was gathered between 1742 and 1748. Nathaniel Brown, Jr., was ordained pastor of this small group on November 14, 1751, and held office for four years. He fell under censure in 1755, for what is not known.[43] Elder Park Allyn, the next pastor, was deposed for alleged immorality and the membership

[41] Hurd, pp. 734-35.

[42] Hurd, p. 736.

[43] John Avery, History of the Town of Ledyard (Norwich, Conn.: Noyes and Davis, 1901), p. 52.

seems to have scattered. Blake believed that the church maintained a shadowy existence until about 1811.[44]

Lyme. Like most other population centers in New London County, Lyme shared extensively in the revival, both in conversions and in the excitement that followed. Jonathan Parsons, pastor of the Old Lyme Congregational Church (first parish), was at first suspicious of Whitefield and his methods but went to hear the great revivalist and developed a close friendship with him. In fact, Whitefield died in Parsons' house in Newburyport, Massachusetts, and was buried in front of the pulpit of the church in which Parsons preached there. Coming to the support of Whitefield, Parsons became a friend of the revival and experienced one in the Lyme church. In 1741 he enjoyed 150 additions to his church by profession of faith.[45] But his support of the revival caused Old Light opposition to him in his congregation, and Parsons was dismissed from his church in 1745.

The New Lights found the situation in the church increasingly intolerable and formed a separate church the following year, ordaining as their pastor on December 25, 1746, John Fuller, one of their number. After more than his share of problems and heartaches, Fuller moved to the pastorate of the Bean Hill church in Norwich in 1759. After a somewhat rocky two or three years there, he moved to the pastorate of the United Church in Plainfield, apparently having had enough of separatism.[46] There

[44] Blake, Separates, p. 192.

[45] Records of the First Congregational Church, Old Lyme, I, 34-41.

[46] Blake, Separates, p. 171.

is no known record of what happened to the Lyme church when Fuller left it; presumably it died.

In the second parish of Lyme (East Lyme) a separate church was formed under the leadership of Ebenezer Mack, who was ordained its pastor on January 12, 1749. Three years later Mack and a majority of the church became Baptist, and this was the origin of what became the First Baptist Church of East Lyme.[47] In 1752 this church had a membership of sixty-eight.[48]

Goen has also found evidence of a separate church in the third parish of Lyme (North Lyme) where a church stood at Grassy Hill under the pastorate of Daniel Miner from 1757 to 1799.[49] Furthermore, Goen reports a separate fellowship at Hadlyme, which had been set off from North Lyme and Haddam; but he is not clear whether this group ever officially organized as a church.[50] In 1768 this group numbered about thirty families.

Montville (formerly North Parish, New London. The first indication of a separatist movement in Montville appears in the minutes of a meeting of the Congregational church on February 19, 1745, to consider reasons why Isaac Hammond had withdrawn from the communion of the church with ten others. Reasons given included that the church was on the Saybrook Platform, regeneration was not a requirement for communion, and a public declaration of the pastor that he did not care whether or not members were

[47] Blake, Separates, p. 182.

[48] Hurd, p. 562.

[49] Goen, p. 78.

[50] Goen, p. 78.

converted. The separatists concluded that the Congregational church at Montville was "a Babylonish Church."[51] During 1747 these malcontents organized a separate church under the leadership of Dyer Hyde, who apparently was quite successful in drawing away many of the regular congregationalists.[52] After a short ministry Hyde was succeeded by Joshua Morse on May 17, 1750. Under him the separates declared themselves an open-communion Baptist church. On March 9, 1750, just before Morse assumed leadership of the group, the standing Congregational church revived the case of those who had withdrawn from the communion of the church. Most of the separatist group appeared and repeated their reasons for absenting themselves. The church clerk concluded the matter by saying that "the following members went off to the Baptists." Sixteen were so designated.[53] Morse was a dedicated minister, but he was more interested in itinerant evangelism than pastoral duties; so the Montville church suffered. When he moved to Massachusetts in 1779 the church ceased to exist.[54]

Preston. Before Pastor Salmon Treat of the Congregational Church in Preston died in 1744, his congregation was rent by a separatist controversy. The contention was to rage on into the ministry of his successor, Asher Rossiter. As the contention heated up, a congregational meeting was called for March 21, 1745, to consider grievances brought by some of

[51] Records of the Montville Congregational Church, III, 220.

[52] Blake, Separates, p. 178.

[53] Records of the Montville Congregational Church, III, 220-227.

[54] Blake, Separates, p. 178.

the brethren. For this occasion the church decided to invite Rev. Hezekiah Lord of Preston Second Church to meet with them when the aggrieved were supposed to appear.[55] Meetings were held on April 24, April 29 and December 11, 1745, when Lord was present. He returned for other sessions in 1746. After prolonged discussion, apparently all twenty-three of the separatists were expunged from the church roll. One of them repented and was restored to fellowship.[56] Reasons given for separating concerned state control of the church, laxness in requiring conversion for church membership and refusal to let the members exercise gifts in preaching and exhorting.[57]

The Preston Separate Church was gathered on March 17, 1747. Only six signed the covenant, but the fellowship grew steadily. Paul Park, one of their number, was ordained pastor July 15, 1747. The charge given him at that time may be somewhat indicative of the direction in which the

[55] The church in north Preston (second society) was able to hold within its membership almost all who were quickened at the time of the Awakening. Probably this was due to the conservative nature of the citizens who dreaded anything approaching religious insanity and to the wise leadership of Hezekiah Lord. Nine days after the separate church was founded in south Preston, Lord's congregation moved to the effect that it would be an offense to the church if any of its members were to withdraw without giving "reasons agreeable to the word of God for their doing so"; and if some did withdraw, the pastor and two members would go in the church's name to try to persuade them to return. No other action against the separatists was taken, and apparently none was needed. See Daniel L. Phillips, Griswold--A History (Published by the Author, 1929), p. 30.

[56] Records of the First Congregational Church, Preston, I, 40-42.

[57] Blake, Separates, pp. 60-61; and Records of the Preston Separate Church in Ruby Parke Anderson (ed.), The Parke Scrapbook (Baltimore: Port City Press, Inc., 1965). The separate church records are preserved at the New London Historical Society and have for the first time been made available to the public in the Parke Scrapbook.

separatist movement was going: ". . . it was enjoined upon him, by no means to study or premeditate what he should say in public; but to speak as the spirit should give him utterance."[58] Ten years after its organization, the church had received a total of eighty members. In 1766 a revival brought in twenty-five and in 1775 another revival brought in twenty-four more. Of course there were other additions to the fellowship. In fact, much of the time the separate church in Preston seems to have been much more prosperous than the one from which it separated. During the pastorate of Asher Rossiter (1744-1781), membership in the standing church shrunk from 106 to 17.[59]

But the health of the Preston Separate Church was only comparative. Within the first decade of its history internal dissensions arose over baptism, which resulted in a formidable secession from the seceders. Nine had left the separate church for the Baptist church by 1757; others left later. After a ministry of fifty-five years, Paul Park died on June 25, 1802, at the age of 82. His church almost died shortly thereafter. Efforts to revive it were made in 1815, when it was voted to ordain Amos Avery as minister; the ceremony seems never to have occurred. The church apparently died in 1817, when the last entry was made in the church records. The remaining members scattered to the regular church in Preston city, to the Methodists, the Baptists and Universalists.[60]

[58] Trumbull, II, 195.

[59] Bi-Centennial Celebration of the First Congregational Church of Preston, Connecticut, 1698-1898 (Preston: Published by the Society, 1900), p. 68.

[60] Blake, Separates, p. 176.

Churches in Windham County

Windham County ran New London County close competition in terms of the number of separate churches established. While the list was not quite so long in Windham, the excitement was virtually as great and nearly every town in the county spawned a separate church. According to Miss Larned, there were separations from the mother church in every town in the county.[61] But not all of these seceders established churches in their communities.

Canterbury. Canterbury experienced more excitement and confusion during the Great Awakening than almost any other town in Connecticut. This was due in large measure to the fact that the minister, John Wadsworth, was dismissed in 1741 for immorality. From that point until the end of 1744 the church was without a pastor; so there was no one to keep a firm hand on religious proceedings among the people. Eleazar Wheelock, Jonathan Parsons, Benjamin Pomeroy and especially Samuel Buell, among the itinerant evangelists, ministered there; and local laymen also exercised their gifts. Apparently there was a considerable amount of irregularity in the church services; and the church as a whole became New Light in persuasion and withdrew from fellowship with the established churches of the county, the first in the colony to do so. On January 27, 1743, the church voted unanimously for the Cambridge Platform and declared that it had never accepted the Saybrook Platform.[62]

[61] Ellen D. Larned, History of Windham County, Connecticut (Worcester, Mass.: Published by the Author, 1874-80), I, 468.

[62] Blake, Separates, p. 147.

While the church was almost solidly New Light, the town and thus the ecclesiastical society, were almost completely Old Light. Therefore it was impossible to come to any sort of agreement on calling a minister or settling the affairs of the church. One by one the prospective candidates were rejected. Finally the town appealed to the county consociation, but the church refused to acknowledge the authority of that body and called a council of New Light ministers. Out of the meeting of both groups came a compromise agreement to invite James Cogswell of Lebanon (Yale graduate of 1742) to minister to them on trial. For a while the congregation was at peace and Cogswell had the privilege of preaching to a well-filled meeting house. After a few weeks, however, it became clear that Cogswell was a Saybrook Platform man and that he subscribed to the Half-Way Covenant. The truce was broken and the New Lights resumed their separate meetings at the home of Samuel Wadsworth.

With the New Lights out of the way, the minority proceeded to invite Cogswell to become their minister in full standing, and he accepted the terms of their call. Meanwhile, John and Ebenezer Cleveland had attended the separate meetings at Wadsworth's while they were home on vacation from Yale and had been summoned to account for so irregular an activity. This action stirred the separatists at Canterbury profoundly and heated up relations between the two factions. As action by the Yale administration against the two Clevelands was nearing the expulsion verdict, a church meeting was held at the meeting house at Canterbury on November 27 to consider the ordination of Cogswell and was attended by all factions. At this emotion-packed session Colonel Dyer, leader of the Old Light faction, proposed that all who considered themselves to be under the Saybrook

Platform move to the east side of the meeting house. Sixteen promptly did so, organized themselves as a congregation, chose a moderator and secretary and adjourned to a private home, where they unanimously chose Cogswell as their pastor. The society then proceeded to arrange for Cogswell's ordination, for which purpose the Windham County Consociation met December 26, 1744.[63]

The chief problem facing this body was not so much whether the candidate would make a fit pastor for the congregation at Canterbury but who constituted the real church at Canterbury. All remonstrances of the separatists were swept aside and the ultimate conclusion reached by the consociation that the Saybrook Platform was the rule governing all churches of the colony unless they specifically renounced it at the time of their organization. This the Canterbury church had not done until 1743 and so could not claim immunity from the Connecticut establishment. Those who did adhere to the Saybrook Platform at Canterbury (the minority of sixteen) therefore constituted the official church there.[64]

The council then proceeded to the ordination of James Cogswell, but only over those "who had called him and should willingly put themselves under his ministerial care."[65] On the advice of the council, the Society of Canterbury held a meeting and voted the following amazingly generous provision:

[63] Larned, I, 422-23.

[64] Larned, I, 424-25.

[65] Larned, I, 425.

> That those in this society who are differently minded from us and can't conscientiously join in ye settlement of Mr. James Cogswell as our minister may have free liberty to enjoy their own opinions, and we are willing they should be released and discharged from paying anything to ye support of Mr. Cogswell, or living under his ministry any longer than until they have parish privileges granted to them and are settled in church by themselves according to the order of ye Gospel, or are otherwise lawfully released.[66]

In other words, the separatists could have arranged for the creation of a second society and church in Canterbury if they had desired. Unfortunately, however, the separates refused to grasp this opportunity. They still held that they were the true church of Canterbury and insisted that the minority who had accepted the Saybrook Platform were the separatists. They held tenaciously to their principles and to the records of the Canterbury church. On January 6, 1745, they met to renew the church covenant and to make sure that it tallied fully with their convictions. Among other provisions, the amendments included the following. There are "no half members in Christ . . . this church covenants to admit none to own the covenant that will not come to full communion . . . nor will we admit any to baptism but true believers and their seed."[67]

Obtaining a pastor was more difficult. Their first choice was Elisha Paine; but with hundreds of letters coming to him from all over New England and beyond seeking his assistance, he felt led to an itinerant ministry. Next they turned to John Cleveland, who for reasons unknown also declined to accept their call. Finally they settled on Solomon Paine. He was willing to serve them but for several months fought a

[66] Larned, I, 425-26.

[67] Blake, Separates, p. 81.

battle with himself over whether or not the Bible taught infant baptism to be legitimate. If it did not, he felt he could not enter the ministry. At length, on July 7, 1746, he signified to the church his willingness to serve them and was ordained on September 10, with the assistance of officers of the Mansfield Separate Church. Six days later sixty-seven signed the covenant and joined the fellowship,[68] which already consisted of fifty-seven who had signed the covenant a year earlier.[69] Subsequently the congregation built a church west of the green.

Solomon Paine served the Canterbury church faithfully until his death in 1754. After this the congregation was without a regular minister until 1759 when, on April 18, they ordained Joseph Marshall. Participating in that service were separatist ministers Paul Park from Preston, Bliss Willoughby from Norwich and Alexander Miller from Plainfield.[70] Apparently Marshall lacked judgment in handling people and was dismissed from the church in 1768. During Marshall's pastorate the Separate church began to decline. Some of the pillars of the church died, others moved to western Connecticut, New York and Vermont. The Baptists made considerable inroads. Never again did the separatists call a full-time minister, though Curtis Coe, Israel Day and John H. Stevens preached there for varying periods of time. Solomon Morgan of the regular Congregational church gave them one-third time late in the century. The church

[68] Larned, I, 443.

[69] Larned, I, 438.

[70] Records of the First Congregational Church, Canterbury, I, 10. Original records on deposit at the Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford. Since the Separate Church continued to hold the church records, the history of their actions is found in the First Church records.

reorganized in 1782, but this move appeared to result in no benefits and did not eventuate in the calling of a pastor. In 1788 about thirty of the more prominent families returned to the established church.[71] Thereafter the separate fellowship eked out an increasingly shadowy existence. The last baptismal record to appear in the church records is dated July 29, 1804,[72] and the last reported business transaction occurred in the spring of 1806.[73]

Another chapter in the history of the Canterbury separatists concerns developments in the second parish of Pomfret (known in the early days as Mortlake Parish and later as Brooklyn). As Miss Larned notes, this church might have escaped defections had it not been so closely affiliated with Canterbury. The Clevelands and the Paines had relatives in that church and Canterbury residents were involved in revivalistic activity in Brooklyn.[74] Overt trouble in Brooklyn seems to have begun on September 10, 1742. After a church service several members of the congregation harranged part of the congregation on the common before the meeting-house door. Pastor Ephraim Avery went out and stopped them and the following sabbath publicly debarred those who had been guilty from the communion table until the matter could be investigated. Indignant, four who sympathized with them stalked out of the church service. The church promptly

[71] Andrew J. Hetrick, A Historical Discourse Preached in the Meeting-House on Canterbury Green (Norwich, Conn.: n. p., 1895), p. 19.

[72] Albert C. Bates (ed.), Records of the Congregational Church in Canterbury, Connecticut, 1711-1844 (Hartford: Connecticut Historical Society,, 1932), p. 95.

[73] Printed Records of Canterbury Church, p. 118.

[74] Larned, I, 444.

called a meeting to deal with these actions.

The decision reached in the subsequent meeting was that since the church had not taken a stand on public exhortation before, the three exhorters should be forgiven this time and should abstain from such conduct in the future. Of those who walked out of the communion service, one was forgiven and the other three were to be debarred from further "Gospel privileges" until they had made a public confession. Reaction to decisions of this October 18 meeting of the church on the part of those pronounced against was speedy. On November 5 a group of twenty-four dissenters declared their dissatisfaction with the discipline of the church and declared that the church had the form of godliness and denied the power thereof and that they therefore were withdrawing from the church.[75] After repeated meetings of the church and the county consociation, two or three confessed their errors and were restored to fellowship; fourteen were publicly excommunicated in December, 1746. Eleven others received virtually the same treatment in 1748. Most of these twenty-five united with the separate church at Canterbury; some of the more prominent ones came back to the standing church. No formal organization of separatists took place in the Brooklyn parish.[76]

Mansfield. While it can be argued that the Separate Church in Canterbury was the true Congregational church of the town because it constituted the majority of the old congregation and because it held the church

[75] Larned, I, 447.

[76] Larned, I, 449-40.

records and covenant, such cannot be said for the separates of Mansfield. They were definitely in the minority, and were classified as separates by everyone's standards and even drew up a new church covenant different from that of the standing church.[77]

Evidence of trouble in the standing church first appears in minutes of a meeting held September 27, 1745, at the church to deal with those who had separated themselves from the congregation some time before. On December 12 of the same year the church voted to suspend twenty-three separatists, noting that their reasons for separating were "slanderous and defamatory."[78] Suspension was probably the only course of action that could be followed because on October 9 the seceders had formed themselves into a separate church and were in effect no longer members of the first church.

The Killingly Declaration describes the organization of the Mansfield church:

> The Manner, in which they formed themselves into a visible Church, was this; they gave a verbal Relation to each other, of their Experience, of a Work of Grace upon their Souls, to the Satisfaction of each other; a special Respect being had to the Fruits of Grace, that discover themselves in the Lives and Conversation of such as are truly godly, or gracious Persons: And also subscribed to Articles of Faith, and Practice, and a Church Covenant, that had been previously drawn up, and in their Opinion, agreeable to the Word of God.[79]

Subsequently the new congregation chose Deacon Thomas Marsh to be their

[77] This covenant is discussed in connection with views of the separatists in the next chapter.

[78] Records of the First Congregational Church, Mansfield, Vol. A, 91-2.

[79] An Historical Narrative and Declaration of Strict Congregational Churches Convened by Delegation at Killingly. . . (Providence: Bennett Wheeler, 1781), p. 11.

pastor and appointed January 6, 1746, for his ordination. But the day before his ordination he was arrested and imprisoned for preaching the gospel without a license. The separatists of Mansfield did not know of the arrest, however, and met on the appointed day for the ordination. Elisha Paine preached to them and doubtless incited them to a fever pitch of excitement. At this point thirteen ministers of Windham County appeared to read a proclamation to the group denouncing their unlawful proceedings. It was hardly the psychological moment for the official clergy to make their point, and they were forced to leave in haste.[80]

Undaunted, the church chose another of their number, John Hovey, as pastor and ordained him in February. Assisting in this ordination was Rev. Thomas Denison, pastor of the Separate Church at Ashford. Denison had been ordained by the Baptists, and this was the first ordination among the Strict Congregational Churches.[81] During the year 1746 Denison assisted in the ordination of eight separate ministers, and later he assisted in most of the other separatist ordinations.[82] When Marsh was released from prison in June, he was ordained colleague pastor with Hovey the following month.

Ten years later, in 1756, part of this congregation moved to New Jersey, probably to escape the ecclesiastical oppression of Connecticut. The remainder dwindled away, some to the Baptists. Finally in 1765

[80] See The Result of a Council of the Consociated Churches of the County of Windham (Boston: J. Draper, 1747), p. 5.

[81] Killingly Declaration, p. 12.

[82] Goen, p. 76.

there were only two men and two women remaining of the Mansfield separatists and they joined the church in South Killingly. So the separatist movement in Mansfield came to an end.[83]

Plainfield. Plainfield was as torn by the issues surrounding the Awakening as any town in the colony. This was true in part because Joseph Coit, who had served the church since 1703, was aged and infirm and unable to deal effectively with the issues or parties that arose. Moreover, Coit was firmly opposed to New Light views. Since he was unable to carry on the ordinary services of the church unaided, suitable assistants were required; some of them were New Light in sympathies and gave support to that position in the town.

The New Lights, faced with the opposition of an incompetent and adamantly Old Light minister, concluded there was no recourse but to form a separate church. To the office of pastor they called one of their number, Thomas Stevens, Jr., and ordained him September 11, 1746. Assisting in the service were Solomon Paine of Canterbury, Thomas Marsh of Mansfield and Thomas Denison of the Franklin church in Norwich.[84] Stevens was a powerful preacher and he won a large following, with the result that soon a majority of the town was New Light in sympathy. Thus they were able to block continued salary payments to Coit and initiated moves to find a new and energetic pastor for the standing church.

After one abortive attempt, all parties seemed to agree on David

[83] Blake, Separates, p. 164.

[84] Larned, I, 451.

Rowland of Fairfield, a 1743 graduate of Yale. On July 13, 1747, the town voted to give him a call; but when they learned how attached he was to the Saybrook Platform and how opposed he was to separatism, they decided not to finalize the transaction. A majority in the church, however, was in favor of settling Rowland. So the situation was directly the opposite of that in Canterbury, where the church was mostly New Light and the town predominantly Old Light. Though not fully installed, Rowland continued to serve the standing church and was therefore around to provide leadership for the Old Light faction. Since both factions were led by vigorous young men, the strife became fierce, while old Mr. Coit was a helpless and unpaid bystander. The stalemate continued for some months until December 3, 1747, at which time the friends of Rowland found themselves unexpectedly in a majority at the annual town meeting. The separate faction had grown over-confident and lax and had neglected to keep up their attendance. The Old Lights hastened to call Rowland and the New Lights were shocked to discover that they had been out-maneuvered. Rowland's ordination was set for March 15, 1748. Both the minister elect and his ordination council decided to proceed, because of the need of the congregation and in the hope that Rowland might be a blessing to them, in spite of the fact that more than half of the town was opposed to him. Ministers participating in the ordination were Ebenezer Williams, Samuel Dorrance, Marston Cabot, Samuel Mosely and Ebenezer Devotion, the same group that had ordained James Cogswell at Canterbury against the wishes of the majority of the congregation. Here they were acting against the wishes of the majority of the ecclesiastical society.

Unfortunately for Rowland, the separatists still controlled the town

government and refused to pay the minister's salary. Every year he was forced to sue through the courts to obtain his support, and a struggle that began with clearcut principles descended to the level of a litigious squabble over a minister's salary and funds to keep the church in repair.[85] With the life and energies of the town consumed in legal contests, the revival spirit died and the churches declined. As in other kinds of war no one really won. When Stevens died in 1755, the Separate church was cold and languid. Finally, about three years later, a move was consummated to unite the Plainfield church with that in Voluntown and to accept Voluntown's pastor (1758). Eleven years later with both the standing and Separate churches in decadent condition, another union was effected and the resultant church became a regular Congregational church.

South Killingly. Geographically separated as they were from the rest of the town, the residents of South Killingly for a long time had been permitted to meet as a separate group and enjoy the services of a minister. These people had adopted separatist principles; and when the third parish of Killingly was organized in 1746, they found themselves part of an ecclesiastical system contrary to their preferences. So they proceeded to organize as a separate church toward the end of that year and in the spring of 1747 called Samuel Wadsworth from among their number as pastor. He was ordained June 3, 1747. Since these distant residents had been virtually an independent church for some years, they were allowed to go their own way without condemnation from the established church. They were, however, required to pay toward the support of the established church in

[85] For a discussion, see Larned, I, 453-57.

the third parish located on Breakneck Hill. The Breakneck Hill church never was as flourishing as the Separate Church, though it made a valiant effort to succeed. It dismissed its last pastor in 1771 and thereafter died.[86]

Meanwhile the Separate Church prospered. In 1755, members of this congregation were given relief from taxation for the established church.[87] But that relief applied only to the original memorialists signing the petition for relief. Finally, however, in 1770 the separatists were permitted to incorporate as a distinct ecclesiastical society,[88] which meant that they were free from all payment to the establishment in the future and free to conduct all of their affairs as they wished.

Wadsworth served the church until his death in 1762. The church turned naturally to its membership to find another man to lead them. Thomas Denison, prominent in the early days of the Separate movement, had recently come among them and they were impressed with his abilities. Unfortunately, the congregation neglected to find out that Denison had lost the confidence of separatists elsewhere because of his severe temper and other weaknesses. After they installed him in 1762, the church went through a period of real trial lasting for about two years. The church was able to disengage themselves from the pastoral relationship only after a council of Separate ministers had met at the South Killingly meeting house in May, 1764.[89]

[86] Larned, II, 92.

[87] Blake, Separates, p. 168.

[88] Larned, II, 95-6.

[89] Larned, II, 93-5.

That same year they called Eliphalet Wright of Mansfield to be their pastor. He proved to be an excellent choice, and the church prospered under his leadership. In 1765 the Killingly church received as members Abraham and Hannah Spafford and Nathaniel Bennet and Hannah Wright, the remaining members of the Separate Church in Mansfield. In 1776-77 a revival broke out in the church which brought in fifty persons by profession of faith.[90] Wright also adopted the Articles of Faith and Covenant used by the Separate Church of Plainfield and began a rapprochement with the more evangelical of the standing churches, with which the separatists differed little.[91] Under Wright's successor, Israel Day (1785-1826), the South Killingly church returned to the standing order (1799). Day also witnessed revivals in 1788 and 1800, which brought into his congregation by profession of faith forty-nine and sixty-four respectively.[92]

Windham. When the Great Awakening came to Windham, about 800 lived in the first parish.[93] In 1740 membership of the church was 287 and every head of a household in the Society was connected with the church either by profession or by owning the covenant.[94] The revival brought 114 into the

[90] Contributions to Ecclesiastical History, p. 480.

[91] See Eliphalet Wright, The Difference between Those Called Standing Churches and Those Called Strict Congregationalists. . . (Norwich, Conn.: John Trumbull, 1775).

[92] Contributions to Ecclesiastical History, p. 480.

[93] Goen, p. 80.

[94] Richard M. Bayles (ed.), History of Windham County (New York: W. W. Preston and Co., 1889), p. 284.

church by profession of faith in 1741-43.[95] In view of these statistics, it would seem that most of those making profession of faith had probably at least owned the covenant.

Soon after the revival came to Windham, the spirit of separatism did too. A separate church was organized in the parish in 1747, and Elihu (or Elisha) Morse was ordained its pastor on October 7 of that year. It is common to assert that these separatists were a lawless and disreputable lot.[96] In fact, the agitations of the separatists were so great and so many separatists were thrown into prison that even an additional story added to the jail was insufficient and a whole new building was ordered in 1743.[97] Goen observes, however, "It is entirely possible that what is called lawless here was no more than individualism and independency asserting itself in an area which was still practically frontier."[98] The whole church had been plagued by unruly members during the ministry of Thomas Clap (1725-39).[99]

Pastor Stephen White of the standing church persuaded the rigid disciplinarians in his congregation to restrain themselves, and apparently no action was taken against the separatists. Perhaps he realized that a breeze of opposition would fan their energies into a flame and bring success to the movement. At any rate, Miss Larned observes, "The Separate

[95] Records of the First Congregational Church, Windham, I, 7.

[96] Larned, I, 459.

[97] Larned, I, 459-60.

[98] Goen, p. 81.

[99] Goen, p. 80.

church, thus left to itself, soon fell to pieces."[100] Morse soon became a Baptist. The more moderate members of his congregation returned to their former allegiance; others joined separate churches in Mansfield and Scotland parish.

In Canada Parish (Windham second) the spirit of separatism also arose, but there is no evidence that anyone there thought seriously of establishing a separate church. A few from the parish joined separate churches nearby, however. For instance, John Hovey and Thomas Marsh, co-pastors of the Strict Congregational church in Mansfield, apparently both came from Canada.

The situation was quite different, however, in Scotland Parish (Windham third). There a strong and reasonably stable separate church was organized. Many of Ebenezer Devotion's people at the Scotland Congregational Church took exception to his strong adherence to the Saybrook Platform and his unwillingness to grant lay participation in worship and began to hold separate meetings in homes of church members. For their failure to attend stated worship at the Scotland church, the separatists were cited to appear at a congregational meeting on January 22, 1746, to give an account of their conduct. The group appeared and gave eight reasons for their defection. As listed below, the reasons come from the records of the Separate church which was later established. Ultimately the eight reasons were expanded into twelve and answered in a pamphlet written by Devotion.[101] The separatists asserted:

[100] Larned, I, 458.

[101] Ebenezer Devotion, An Answer of the Pastor and the Brethren of the Third Church in Windham . . . (New London, Conn.: T. Green, 1747).

1. They believed the Saybrook Platform to be contrary to the word of God.

2. They were opposed to the Half-Way Covenant.

3. The Scotland church received members without demanding satisfactory profession of faith.

4. The church practiced the form of godliness but had not the power of it.

5. In the church was a lack of Gospel preaching in clear demonstration of the power of God.

6. The church called the present work of God in the land a work of the Devil.

7. It persecuted those who held this work was the work of God.

8. The church denied the right of any except the pastor to teach or exhort in public manner.[102]

The church believed the reasons given to be insufficient and called upon the seceders to return to the fold. Upon their failure to respond, the seceders were excommunicated on March 17, 1746. During the following summer they organized into a separate church which became known as the Brunswick Separate Church and soon gained a very respectable position in the community. Although only about twenty had been excommunicated earlier in the year, those signing the covenant of incorporation of the new church numbered 144.[103] At first the Brunswick church did not call a pastor but enjoyed the ministry of Elisha and Solomon Paine and Thomas Marsh. All of

[102] Records of the Brunswick Separate Church, pp. 1-2.

[103] Brunswick Church Records, pp. 8-10.

these were called to appear before a meeting of the Consociation of Windham County on February 11, 1747, to give account of their unlawful conduct and their beliefs. Of course these men did not appear; so the Consociation proceeded to examine their views and conduct and make certain pronouncements about views of the separatists. These were published in a pamphlet.[104]

Undaunted, the Scotland church continued its ministry and growth. When John Palmer, one of their number, became too active in preaching, he was thrown into the Hartford jail for four months. Later the church called him to be their pastor and ordained him on May 17, 1749.

> Though deficient in education and somewhat rough in speech and manner, Mr. Palmer was a man of estimable character and sound piety, and under his guidance the Brunswick church, as it was called, maintained for many years a good standing in the community, comparatively free from those excesses and fanaticisms which marred so many of its contemporaries.[105]

The congregation amply supported their worship by voluntary contributions and built a meeting house. Later, in 1773, they petitioned the General Assembly for release from taxation for support of the Scotland standing church and won their case.[106] Palmer was the church's only pastor. After his death on August 13, 1807, at the age of 86, the church wasted away until 1813, when it was dissolved by the remaining members, who were encouraged to join the Canterbury church. Some did but others did not. Some had already drifted away to the Baptists and Methodists.

[104] Result of a Council of the Consociated Churches of the County of Windham.

[105] Larned, I, 464.

[106] Bayles, p. 400.

Voluntown. A large part of the Voluntown population embraced separate principles and became increasingly hostile to the established church and its pastor, Samuel Dorrance. Evidence of a separation first appears in the church records under an entry for May 16, 1745, when the congregation sought to take disciplinary action against seven separating brethren. The case was continued until July when the seven were to give explanation for their conduct. They brought in their answers in writing and they were deemed unsatisfactory. The case was again continued, to October 8, when all seven were suspended. On August 5, 1746, six others were suspended and two years later, on September 7, 1748, eight additional men were excommunicated.[107] When the group organized into a church is not known, but they ordained Alexander Miller as their pastor April 15, 1751. Miller was an able man "of commanding appearance and marked character, superior in education to most of the Separate ministers."[108] The Plainfield and Voluntown Separate churches joined in 1758, at which time Miller moved to Plainfield and served the united church until 1761, when he died. Subsequently the Separate church in Plainfield united with the standing church (1769) and called as pastor John Fuller, who had ministered to separates at Lyme and Bean Hill (Norwich). He was ordained in regular fashion by the ministers of Windham County.[109]

Churches in Hartford County

Hartford County lay along both banks of the Connecticut River as it

[107] Records of the Voluntown and Sterling Congregational Church, pp. 65-8.

[108] Larned, I, 458.

[109] Goen, p. 77.

flowed south from Massachusetts to Long Island Sound. Just as winds of religious excitement blew down the valley of the Connecticut in 1740 and 1741, so the more heated winds of separatism were to descend the valley in subsequent years. They did not scorch as much of the countryside in Hartford County, however, as they had in New London and Windham Counties.

Suffield. South of the Massachusetts border stood Suffield on the west side of the river. As in so many other communities, growing pains of the town were added to the excitement of the Awakening. People in West Suffield had grown more numerous and wanted a church of their own more in the geographical center of their population; so they had petitioned for a separate society. After some controversy a Second Ecclesiastical Society was created for West Suffield in 1743.

Further dimunition of the first church was soon caused by the Separate or Strict Congregationalists. Evidence of this fact first appears in the records of the First Society on November 15, 1747. On that date a congregational meeting was held to deal with the question of what to do with those who had been absenting themselves from church and to find reasons for their separation. These reasons the separatists refused to put in writing; so Joseph Hastings, a leader of the group, was permitted to give the reasons orally. Hastings spoke long and in obtuse fashion, which made the members grumble and to ask him to be more concise. In spite of Hastings' ramblings, the "clark" gathered from his speech a number of reasons:

1. The church was not built on a good or right foundation and was therefore not a church of Christ.

2. Unconverted persons may be members of the visible church and

saving faith was not required for membership.

3. The church allows that an unconverted person may preach the gospel; saving grace is not essential in a gospel minister.

4. The church denies that one Christian can know the internal state of another.

5. The church denies private Christians the liberty of exercising their gifts in public, especially women speaking in the church.

6. What Hastings judged to be the work of the Spirit of God, many in the church had called the spirit of the devil.

7. The pastor was supported by a yearly tax laid on the people.

8. The pastor (Ebenezer Gay, pastor 1742-92) claimed greater powers in the church than consistent with Congregational principles.

Others of the separatists gave other reasons, among which was the intimation that Gay was a very dull preacher. After continued wrangling, the group of separatists was excommunicated on March 9, 1748.[110]

The Separate Church in Suffield apparently was not fully organized until 1750; Joseph Hastings was ordained their pastor on April 18 of that year. The congregation met in private homes until 1762, when a church building was constructed. Meanwhile Baptist sentiments had crept in and divided the separates. Hastings declared for Baptist doctrines and later became pastor of the Baptist church in Suffield. The remainder and smaller part of the separatists chose Israel Holley as pastor and had him ordained June 29, 1763. Later Holley was dismissed and the church was disbanded about 1784, the members not already Baptist mostly returning to the standing

[110] Records of the First Congregational Church, Suffield, pages not numbered.

church.[111] Holley himself became a Congregational preacher at Granby and North Cornwall.

Enfield. At least by 1751, and probably in the forties, a separate church had been formed at Enfield; by that time it was already rent with divisions. The earliest known pastor was Nathaniel Collins, Jr., who held the post 1762-1787. When he became pastor, his congregation signed a church covenant with him, which was just a renewal of a covenant earlier constructed. Seventy-three names are affixed to the covenant.[112]

After a 1769 appeal to the General Assembly of Connecticut, which this time was not hindered by the First Church of Enfield as it had been before, the Separate Church was legally constituted as the Second Society in Enfield. In that year the congregation numbered eighty members. Only eleven more joined the Second Society after 1770. Internal dissensions continued to plague the church and a number of them went off to the Shakers after 1786. After the death of Collins, the congregation made constant and unsuccessful attempts to obtain a settled pastor. At last, about 1795, Pastor George Atwell of the Enfield Baptists was employed to preach for the Separatists half of the time. Thus, part of the congregation drifted into Baptist views; others returned to the First Church. About 1806 the separatists merged with the Baptist church, which in turn drifted into Adventism and thereafter died. Descendants were permitted by the General Assembly in 1843 to sell the property of the defunct church,

[111] Contributions to Ecclesiastical History, p. 257.

[112] Francis O. Allen (ed.), The History of Enfield, Connecticut (Lancaster, Pa.: The Wickersham Printing Co., 1900), II, 1549.

which by that time consisted of a meeting house and five acres of land.[113]

Somers. A few miles east of Enfield stands the town of Somers. Most would place the beginning of the Separate Church there in 1769, in the disturbed period after the death of Pastor Leavitt in 1761. But Goen begins the church in 1751 and names Joseph Marshall as its pastor from 1751 to 1757.[114] At any rate, Samuel Ely did pastor the church from 1769 to 1774, after which he was apparently dismissed and went off to Massachusetts, where he was prominent in Shays' Rebellion and ended his days in prison. The church is known to have built a meeting house and to have returned in a body to the established church after Ely left town.

Wethersfield and Middletown. As one travels down the Connecticut River from Hartford, he comes first to Wethersfield and later to Middletown. The first preaching done in Wethersfield by a separatist was probably by Ebenezer Frothingham of Cambridge, Massachusetts. The church which he organized on January 7, 1747, was not a split from any one church but a group gathered in his home from the general area. Frothingham was ordained pastor of the church on October 28, 1747. In part because of the sufferings of the dissenting congregation at the hands of local officials, the majority of them decided to move to New York. In 1754 the rest moved to Middletown with Frothingham who was installed pastor of a Strict Congregational Church in that town. The Middletown congregation increased considerably during Frothingham's ministry and in 1788 divided

[113] Allen, II, 1529.

[114] Goen, pp. 307, 144.

into two churches, at which time Frothingham was dismissed. The smaller of these two (in Westfield) became Baptist, but the main body retained its Congregational viewpoint. This group chose Stephen Parsons as pastor in 1788 and dismissed him in 1795, when he turned Baptist. David Huntington of Lebanon served the congregation 1797-1800; Horatio McGeorge, 1801-2; Benjamin Graves of East Haddam, 1803-1812. The church was dissolved about this time but was reorganized in 1816 and joined the general Congregational fellowship as a Strict Congregational Church. It is known today as the South Congregational Church of Middletown.[115]

Haddam and Colchester. A few miles downstream from Middletown is Haddam, where a Separate society is known to have been formed in 1785; but it is questionable that this congregation should be included as part of the discussion of Separate churches coming directly out of the Great Awakening. East of the Connecticut, at Colchester, was a Separate Church over which Jabez Jones was ordained pastor in 1751.[116] A fleeting glimpse or two may be caught of this congregation in the church records of the period, but not enough to construct any sort of history of it.

Churches in New Haven County

There was little separatism west of the Connecticut River. Only three separate churches seem to have been established in New Haven County

[115] See Contributions to Ecclesiastical History, p. 258; David D. Field, Centennial Address (Middletown, Conn.: William B. Casey, 1853), pp. 168-70.

[116] Contributions to Ecclesiastical History, p. 258.

during the middle of the eighteenth century, and it is not completely certain whether two of these should be linked with the Great Awakening. The Wallingford separation might be interpreted as merely a squabble over settlement of a minister, though charges leveled against him did concern doctrinal purity. Issues involved in the secession at Milford antedate the coming of Whitefield to Connecticut, though again doctrine was at stake. The church was plagued with controversies initiated by the revival, and the separation was accomplished after Whitefield's coming. There is, however, no question about the specific connection of the separation in New Haven town with the Great Awakening.

Wallingford. In 1757 a committee charged with finding a minister for the Wallingford church recommended James Dana (Harvard, 1753) as a suitable candidate for settlement. He was invited to preach in Wallingford and was well received. Subsequently he was invited to assume pastoral oversight of the congregation and agreed to do so. At this point a question of his orthodoxy arose, and the answers he gave to questions put to him raised doubts in the minds of some of the committee. When the society voted to give him settlement and salary, 140 were in favor and 62 opposed. Specific charges were made against him to the Consociation of New Haven County by a group of the minority, and the Consociation prohibited the ordination of Dana for doctrinal unsoundness--for Socinian or Arminian tendencies. An Old Light council proceeded to ordain him anyway and did so on October 12, 1758. Many of the issues here seemed to be Old Light versus New Light.[117]

[117] J. L. Rockey, History of New Haven County, Connecticut (New York: W. W. Preston & Co., 1892), I, 388.

Before the ordination the Consociation certified to the ordination council that ninety-five of the society were opposed to Dana and that they possessed half the rateable estate of the town. Opposition through the Consociation had the sentence of non-communion passed on the pastor and some of his principal supporters and later moved to have Dana's ordination council cut off from ministerial relations with other ministers in the county. These men (Joseph Noyes, Isaac Stiles, Theophilus Hall, Samuel Whittlesey, Jonathan Todd, Chauncey Whittlesey) then formed a new ministerial association.[118]

The evangelical opposition absented themselves from the Wallingford church and in 1760 appealed to the General Assembly that they were the rightful church since the others had been cut off by the Consociation. A flood of peditions from both sides went up to the Assembly, which in 1762 permitted the minority to form a separate society--the Wells Society. In October, 1761, Simon Waterman was settled as their pastor with sixty-one members. Nine years later the congregation numbered 104. Meanwhile, in 1762, they built a meeting house. The struggle between the two churches raged for another twenty years. Waterman remained as pastor until 1787, when the church dismissed him because of inability to support him. The church then disbanded and in 1788 the rest of the members went back to the church they had left, even though that congregation was still under sentence of non-communion.[119] The whole affair was a defeat for the ecclesiastical constitution.

[118] Rockey, I, 389.

[119] Rockey, I, 391.

Milford. Unrest in the Milford church began in 1737 when a considerable number, especially among the younger members, objected to the settlement of Samuel Whittlesey as their pastor. The minority accused the candidate of inclining toward too much Arminianism and in general of holding liberal theology. Finally they agreed to his ordination on the condition that if at the end of six months they should remain unsatisfied they should have the privilege of settling another minister more to their liking as his colleague. Whittlesey was on his best behavior for six months and was accepted but shortly afterward made statements that caused considerable uneasiness.

After fruitless appeals to the county association in May, 1740, and later in that year to the town, they decided to declare for the Presbyterian church and apply for privilege to incorporate under the laws of the colony. Forty-six signed the initial application; twelve others soon joined them and their cause gained sympathy every day.[120] The General Assembly did not admit their dissent; so a new memorial was addressed to the Assembly on November 30, 1741, to set up a separate assembly without expressing any special church government. In 1742 they qualified themselves as separatists from the church by the laws of the colony. Meanwhile persecution by the First Church arose. Benajah Case of Simsbury was jailed for preaching to them. Rev. John Eells preached there in April, 1743; the constable searched for Eells but he could not be found. Likewise, a Mr. Kent was complained of as an itinerant preacher among them but could not be apprehended. In April, 1743, the church placed itself under

[120] Rockey, II, 255.

the care of the New Brunswick Presbytery and Rev. Richard Treat of that body was called as pastor; but his congregation in New Jersey would not release him. In August, 1743, Rev. Samuel Finlay, later president of Princeton, preached to them twice, was apprehended for disorderly conduct (for itinerant preaching) and was condemned by Governor Law to "be transported as a vagrant from town to town by the constable of each town" and expelled from the colony.[121] This act brought down a storm of criticism on the heads of the opposition, and greater liberty was extended to the Milford congregation thereafter.

In 1743 the dissenters built their meeting house. Job Prudden was ordained as their pastor in 1747. In May, 1750, the General Assembly released them from paying taxes to the First Society and ten years later they became an ecclesiastical society of the established church, holding their first regular meetings as the Second Society of Milford, October 27, 1760. In 1859 the name of the church was changed to the Plymouth Society.[122]

New Haven. When the Great Awakening came to New Haven, Rev. Joseph Noyes was the respected pastor of the Center Church with twenty-five years of service there to his credit. Both by experience and family ties he could be called a friend of revival. He was the brother-in-law of Jonathan Edwards (their wives were sisters), and his church had shared dramatically in the Connecticut revivals sparked by Edwards' ministry in Northampton. In 1735 the Center Church had received forty-five members

[121] Rockey, II, 256.

[122] See "Some Events in the History of the Church," prepared by Raymond Cable, historian of the church, and on file in the Connecticut State Library.

by profession of faith; and in the following year it admitted fifty-six.[123] Noyes had even allowed the radical James Davenport to occupy his pulpit, but when Davenport began to denounce Noyes as unconverted and his preaching as deadening, Noyes became firmly Old Light.

From the time of Davenport's visit organized opposition to Noyes began to form. On November 18, 1741, fourteen articles of complaint against Mr. Noyes were drawn up and signed by 112 persons (fifty-five men and fifty-seven women), some from the church and some from the Society.[124] They asked to have these complaints heard by the church itself or by a council called to consider them. A month later, on December 28, 1741, having received no satisfaction, thirty-eight presented a memorial at the annual meeting of the First Society to the effect that they found the preaching of Mr. Noyes unprofitable and asked that they become a distinct society for the purpose of worshiping by themselves.[125]

Instead of answering the charges in a meeting of church or society or in a council mutually called, the minister and his followers advocated an appeal to the consociation. The dissenters said that the church had never adopted the Saybrook Platform, even though the former minister had been one of the architects of the Saybrook plan. When a search was made in the church records, no evidence could be found that the church had

[123] Franklin B. Dexter (comp.), Historical Catalogue of the Members of the First Church of Christ in New Haven, Connecticut, A. D. 1639-1914 (New Haven: Published by the Church, 1914), pp. 69-88.

[124] Mary H. Mitchell, History of the United Church of New Haven (New Haven: The United Church, 1942), p. 12.

[125] Mitchell, History of the United Church, p. 12.

ever declared for Saybrook. Then the church voted on January 25, 1742, to subscribe to that platform while dissenters were excluded. The dissenters now declared that they had always considered themselves as belonging to an unconsociated church, and they insisted that Noyes and his friends had now formed themselves into a church other than that with which they, the complainants, were in covenant. They considered their relation as members of the church to be at an end. Claiming benefit of the act of toleration, sixty presented a petition to the county court to be allowed to worship by themselves. This petition was granted by the court on January 29, 1742. On May 7, eighteen men and twenty-five women subscribed to the confession of faith and the covenant and formed the church. Four ministers called for the incorporation meeting included John Graham, Elisha Kent, Joseph Bellamy and Samuel Cooke, moderator. The moderator was minister of the church in Stratfield (now Bridgeport) and his son Samuel, Jr., a prominent figure of New Haven, was one of the "uneasy brethren." In a few weeks the original forty-three had increased to seventy-five members.[126]

The separate church sought a division of the property of the society and the construction of a separate society so they would not be forced to continue to pay for the support of Noyes, but they were not at first successful. Neither were they successful in gaining permission to build a meeting house on the green. They did build elsewhere, however, at the corner of Elm and Church Streets, completed the structure in 1748, and

[126] Records of the White Haven Congregational Church, I, 1-5.

painted it azure blue.[127] But the builders experienced great difficulty in constructing the church because Old Light opponents destroyed materials gathered at the construction site, necessitating the posting of guards at night to protect building materials and partially finished construction.[128]

Worshipers in the Blue Meeting House did not enjoy the services of a fully settled and ordained minister until June, 1751, when Samuel Bird came to them from Dunstable, Massachusetts. He had been expelled from Harvard just before graduation for his New Light theology. His "form and manner were commanding, his voice powerful, his elocution handsome and impressive, his sentiments evangelical."[129] During Bird's ministry the question of the division of the society dragged on until 1757 when it was realized that the two churches were too large to meet in one place; so a council of pastors and laymen voted to make application to the General Assembly to have two ecclesiastical societies or parishes and voted that the inhabitants of the existing society have liberty to enter their names with the clerk of the society before May 1, 1757, declaring which society they wished to belong to.[130] The result was an amazing revelation that

[127] Various explanations have been sought for this color of paint, such as that it stood for orthodoxy, etc., but at that period gaily colored meeting houses were a fad. Pomfret and Windham had churches painted brilliant yellow. Killingly's was yellow with a red roof. In 1762 Brooklyn painted hers orange with doors and trimmings of chocolate and white. A survey of house colors at New Haven in 1748 shows that white was an unusual color; Henry T. Blake, Chronicles of New Haven Green, 1638-1862 (New Haven: Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor Co., 1898), p. 94.

[128] Rockey, II, 179.

[129] Edward E. Atwater, History of the City of New Haven to the Present Time (New York: W. W. Munsell & Co., 1887), p. 126.

[130] Records of the First Ecclesiastical Society, New Haven, I, 50, 73-4.

the New Lights were actually in the majority in the society. At that point they decided to withdraw application to the legislature and work for the dismissal of Noyes.

In 1758, however, the balance shifted somewhat; and the division was effected by the General Assembly the following year. The Old Lights were constituted as the First Society and the New Lights as the White Haven Society. The latter name was chosen because the church was an offspring of Whitefield's preaching; so his name was combined with that of New Haven. At the division, 147 made choice for Mr. Noyes and 179 for Mr. Bird; twenty who made no choice were assigned by the legislature.[131] So ended the parish way; a division could not be made along geographical lines. In 1760 the White Haven Church adopted the Half-Way Covenant,[132] a demonstration of the fact that at least part of the battle of the previous years had been a personality struggle between Noyes and his opponents.

In 1769 when Bird resigned, Jonathan Edwards, Jr., was called to the pastorate of the White Haven Church. Demands by Edwards at that time led to the abandonment of the Half-Way Covenant, and the Half-Way Covenant element left the White Haven church to found the Fair Havens Church. They met in the State House for a time and in 1770 built a church on the green. There was no cooperation between these churches until 1779 when the British invaded and in 1796 the Fair Havens and White Haven churches united as The United Society and renewed fellowship with the regular churches.[133]

[131] Records of the White Haven Congregational Church, III, 76-84; Mitchell, History of United Church, p. 23.

[132] Records of the White Haven Congregational Church, III, 30-31.

[133] Blake, Chronicles, p. 98.

Churches in Litchfield County

Separatism was virtually non-existent in the far western section of Connecticut. Seemingly no separatist churches were established in Fairfield County. Litchfield County apparently spawned two such churches at most. Those who have discussed separatism in Connecticut have tended to include the Torrington Separate Church in their listings. In Torrington the church was split over certain New Light doctrines; a society called a Strict Congregational Church was formed in 1786 and in that year began construction of a meeting house. The following March the group called Lemuel Haynes, a negro preacher, as their pastor. It is not clear whether he remained for only two years or until 1791. At any rate, in that year both churches became reunited and made the new house their place of worship.[134] While it is true that a separate church was formed in Torrington at the end of the eighteenth century, it seems to have been established too late in the century to be specifically linked with the Great Awakening.

New Milford. The one separatist church that must certainly be linked to the revival came into being at New Milford. In 1745 a commotion blew up in New Milford over a so-called illegal settlement of Rev. Noah Wells as pastor of the First Congregational Church. The truth was that a majority wanted an Old Light minister, and the minority vociferously requested a man of New Light persuasion. The majority was determined to have its way and the minority of thirty-five, led by Joseph Ruggles, withdrew. Thus, the majority was able to call Nathaniel Taylor unanimously in 1747.

[134] Blake, Separates, 196; Contributions to Ecclesiastical History, p. 259.

Apparently the church did not take immediate action against the seceders because, according to the church records, on September 12, 1750, the pastor asked the church to consider what to do about absenting brethren. At a meeting called in February, 1751, several were warned to appear to give reasons for their separation. They appeared and mentioned some complaints, including a denial of the Saybrook platform and asked for more time. The meeting was adjourned to March 26. At that time they did not really give adequate reasons but did present them at a later time. Unfortunately the church records do not mention their complaints. Joseph Ruggles did say, however, that the church was not strict enough in its Calvinism, that the church was antichristian and that he opposed the Saybrook Platform. The church admonished the separatists to return to the standing church. Three of the group did but the others remained adamant.[135]

The seceding group organized a Separate Church May 1, 1753. Among those present for the event were Pastor John Palmer of the Separate Church in Scotland and Pastor Jonathan Storey of the Separate Church in Preston Long Society. In 1754 the church petitioned the First Society to be exempted from paying taxes for the support of the minister and the meeting house of the First Church. Amazingly, their request was granted. Subsequently the group was permitted in 1759 to build a meeting house.[136] Elihu Marsh was their first preacher but was not ordained. He probably served them as minister for several years while living in New Fairfield and for

[135] Records of the New Milford Congregational Church, pp. 12-13.

[136] Samuel Orcutt, History of New Milford and Bridgewater, Connecticut, 1703-1882 (Hartford: Case, Lockwood & Brainard, 1882), p. 192.

three years after settling in New Milford. During those years the church increased in numbers and influence. Finally they did have the services of an ordained man, Robert Campbell, who was their pastor 1772-84. He was succeeded by Barnabas Lathrop (1791-93), who in turn was succeeded by Daniel Hine. Hine preached to them until 1812, when he resigned and recommended that his church disband and unite with the First Church. They did disband but joined several churches. Some joined the Baptist church at Northville.[137]

Summary

An investigation of the sort reported here cannot claim to have turned up all of the Separate or Strict Congregational churches gathered in Connecticut, but it probably does not fall far short of the real total. Though there were several other separations, these do not seem to have organized and called a pastor. Sometimes it is a real problem to decide what constituted a full organization. None of the Separate churches could obtain full legal status in the earliest days of their founding, and one cannot always decide at what point a group of people made the transition from a loosely organized fellowship to a more fully organized church. Normally when the separatists organized they wrote a covenant and subscribed to it, but occasionally that act waited until the calling of a pastor. Several years might elapse between a form of organization and the installation of a minister. The Separate churches discussed here may with certainty be said to have organized.

[137] Orcutt, p. 194.

The Separate movement demonstrably was more widespread than some of the older commentators believed. Close to thirty churches of this persuasion were organized, and many more separations actually occurred, so that most of the churches in New London and Windham Counties experienced a separation. The fact that not all of these dissident elements formed churches is due in part to small groups joining with neighboring Separate churches. The accompanying chart shows that most of the known Separate organizations (two thirds of them) were located in Eastern Connecticut: in New London and Windham Counties. But a knowledge that the movement was more widespread than heretofore thought does not destroy the generalization that Separatists were a minority among the New Lights and were, of course, the more radical element among them.

Vague or loose statements are sometimes made concerning the destiny of the Separate churches--to the effect that most of them went off to the Baptists, and the like. This study has revealed that only four of these churches are known certainly to have become Baptist en bloc. Large segments of four or five others became Baptist, and there was a movement of a few individuals from almost every Separate congregation to the Baptists. About half of the Separate churches returned in toto or in substantial measure to the standing order. Approximately one third of them simply died out. For all practical purposes the movement may be said to have died by 1800; three fourths of the Separate churches no longer existed under the constitution according to which they were formed. The rest dragged out a feeble existence for a few years longer.

THE SEPARATE CHURCHES

Church	Date of Founding	Destiny		
		To Established Church	Died	To Baptists
New London County				
Ledyard (N. Groton)	1742-48		c.1811	
Lyme				
1st Parish	1746		c.1759	
2nd Parish (E. Lyme)	1749			1752
3rd Parish (N. Lyme)	1757		1799?	
New London				
1st Parish	1742	by 1748-50		
N. Parish (Montville)	1747			1750
North Stonington	1746	1827		
Norwich				
1st Parish (Bean Hill)	1747	most ret.	1788	
2nd Parish (Franklin)	1746		c.1759	
3rd Parish (Lisbon)	1750	most in 1761		
4th Parish (Preston) Long	1752		1765	
5th Parish (Bozrah)	1756?			1789?
Preston	1747		1817	
Windham County				
Canterbury	1745		1831	
Killingly, South	1746	1799		
Mansfield	1745		1765	
Plainfield	1746		1758 (Union with Voluntown)	
Voluntown	c.1751	1769		
Windham 1st	1747	c.1750		
Windham 3rd (Scotland)	1746		1813	
Hartford County				
Colchester	c.1751		?	
Enfield	1751			c.1806 part to Baptists
Middletown	1747	1816		
Somers	1751?	c.1775		
Suffield	1750	1784		most to Bap. before 1784
New Haven County				
Milford	1741	1760		
New Haven (White Haven)	1742	1796		
Wallingford	1762	1788		
Litchfield County				
New Milford	1753	1812		some to Bap. 1812

CHAPTER IX

FRACTURED ESTABLISHMENT: THE SEPARATE MOVEMENT (B) PROBLEMS AND QUERIES

Why the Separatist Movement Arose

It is generally easier to answer the question "What?" than "Why?" Some effort has been made to demonstrate what separatist churches arose and to detail the story of their development. To some extent the immediate conditions that produced them have been noted. But it remains to discover the underlying factors that helped to bring about this extensive movement in Connecticut. At the outset, it is useful to observe where in the colony the separatist churches were located. A quick reference to the foregoing chart will demonstrate that most of them sprang up in eastern Connecticut. Of the twenty-nine listed on the chart, twenty appeared in New London and Windham counties. As one goes westward in the colony, he finds their incidence to be less frequent. If, then, this is primarily a phenomenon of one locality, it remains to ask what special conditions existed there to produce such a movement.

Indian occupation and control of eastern Connecticut went uninterrupted until King Philip's War in 1675 broke their power. But the first white settlement was not made in Windham County until 1686. Windham county was not carved out until 1726, and at that time only eight towns were organized within its boundaries. Miss Larned hesitates to estimate the population at that time but believes only the town of Windham had as many as 100 families. Some Wabbaquassets and Quinebaug Indians remained and Mohegans

and Shetuckets roved freely through Windham and Canterbury.[1] Frontier conditions definitely prevailed. The people worked hard and possessed little; often they lacked enough to eat. Says Miss Larned:

> Details of controversies previously given furnish abundant testimony to the roughness and violence of the times, and church records bear equal evidence to much looseness of morals and many prevailing immoralities. With all their strictness in Sabbath-keeping and catechizing, in family and church discipline, there was great license in speech and manner, much hard drinking and rude merry making, with occasional outbreaks of Border-ruffianism.[2]

Yet, class distinctions developed early and a few families were able to live in comparative luxury. Added to the lawlessness and irregularities of frontier conditions was the fact that technical irregularities in expropriating eastern Connecticut from the Indians prevented settlers from obtaining clear title to their land. This helps to explain the restlessness of people of this area around the middle of the eighteenth century and before.[3]

Bushman argues against the idea that separatism was a frontier phenomenon. He points out that five eighths of the eastern towns had been settled at least twenty years before the outbreak of the revival and most of them longer. He believes, instead, that separatism came as a result of rapid expansion. The greatest number of separations in one town occurred in Norwich, the richest town in the colony and the commercial center of the east. It had enjoyed steady growth for fifty years as the

[1] Ellen D. Larned, History of Windham County, Connecticut (Worcester, Mass.: Published by the Author, 1874-80), I, 261.

[2] Larned, I, 262.

[3] Edith A. Bailey, "Influences toward Radicalism in Connecticut, 1754-1775," Smith College Studies in History, V (1920), 188-89.

area north of it filled in. Other towns in the vicinity where separations were concentrated had similarly prospered. With rapid expansion the status quo was constantly upset, towns were plunged into turmoil over titles; party strife arose. The social structure was loosened and men alienated from their social and religious leaders. He concludes that in the east where growth was greatest, conditions were most ripe for the separatist movement.[4]

It would be useful to ask not only what conditions people of the eastern part of the colony lived under but also what sort of people they were or what sort of background they had. Both Windham and New London Counties bordered on Rhode Island, whence people of radical religious views were constantly emigrating, as Miss Larned makes clear throughout her history of Windham County. Significantly, a road from Canterbury and Plainfield to Providence was opened in 1722, facilitating contact with the radicals farther east. Moreover, many inhabitants of eastern Connecticut came from the area of the old Plymouth Colony, which had stood for the principles of separatism and independence from its founding. The Baptist church historian, Isaac Backus, was a Norwich separatist who came from a Plymouth family, and he observed that "many who now came out in the separation from these churches, descended from those Plymouth fathers, and meant conscientiously to follow their good principles."[5]

There is truth in all of the suggestions made above, but it seems

[4] See the unpublished dissertation (Harvard, 1960) by Richard L. Bushman, "Government and Society in Connecticut, 1690-1760," pp. 292-93.

[5] Isaac Backus, An Abridgement of the Church History of New-England, 1602-1804 (Boston, 1804), p. 172.

that students of this problem have missed one of the more obvious explanations. In almost every case the separatist churches came out of congregations that had enjoyed the warmth of revival fires burning among them and who had been pastored by men favorable to the revival. Almost all of the ministers of Windham and New Haven Counties had been friendly to the revival and had promoted it in their churches. As one goes farther west in the colony, he finds less enthusiasm for the revival, less incidence of it in the churches and less separatism.[6] Characteristic of all revival movements since the Reformation, and even before, has been an emphasis on the priesthood of the believer (his right to go directly to God), the right of private interpretation of the Bible, the necessity of a direct contact with God in a conversion experience, and the importance of sharing one's faith. Now, if a person is told that his real basis of authority in religious matters is the Bible, which tells him of a need of a conversion experience and a warm faith in God, and which he may interpret for himself, where is the logical stopping place in his religious experience? Luther and Calvin, who taught these same views, had multiplied troubles with groups differing from them in a wide range of theological opinion and church polity. In England after the Anglican break, the awakened went on into Presbyterian, Congregational, Baptist, Quaker and other religious camps. Once a departure is made from the authoritarian state church and an emphasis is placed on the Bible, faith, mysticism and individualism, there is no logical stopping place.

[6] It could be argued with some validity that more separations did not occur in western Connecticut because some Old Lights pulled out of standing churches to join Anglican congregations, leaving the "New-Lighted" element in the churches to have freer reign.

What happened in the Connecticut revival is in a sense a historical recurrence of what happened in Germany, Switzerland and England and elsewhere during the Reformation. And it was paralleled by separatist movements in other colonies where the revival occurred, as Goen has shown.[7] The separatist movement in Connecticut was more intense and more violent than elsewhere in the colonies because the Saybrook Platform gave a Presbyterian complexion to the religious establishment of the Commonwealth and a tight control over individual churches by the General Assembly and the religious hierarchy. Generally speaking, the Connecticut separatists believed that their Bibles did not support a state church concept. They believed that their Bibles taught that churches should be composed of believers only; there were no "Half-way believers" via a Half-Way Covenant or any other means. They could not find any place in their Bibles where a person had to be ordained to share his faith. And some of them, who could find no justification in Scripture for infant baptism, moved into the Baptist camp. A few who reacted against their old Calvinism went into universalism. Having persuaded themselves that their Bibles taught one thing and their churches stood for something different, the disturbed brethren felt that they did wrong by remaining in these camps of error. So they concluded that the scriptural injunction to "come out from among them and be ye separate"[8] applied to them and they obeyed it.

[7] C. C. Goen, Revivalism and Separatism in New England, 1740-1800 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962).

[8] 2 Corinthians 6:17.

Separatist Struggle with Church and State

From the earliest days the New England way was the parish way. Church and state were closely allied in the battle for social control and moral improvement. The state arranged for establishment of a church in each community and saw to it that the churches were properly ordered and supported. Moreover, the political arm provided for only one church and parish in each community. When the population grew to the point that additional churches were needed, a new parish was set off in the new section of town. Inhabitants were not permitted to choose the church they wanted to attend. Properly educated and properly ordained men were called to pastor the churches, and these men enjoyed a high economic and social position in their communities. The entrance of Anglicans, Baptists or Quakers or others into the community threatened social solidarity and the power and prestige of the established clergy. But Anglicans, Baptists and Quakers were few; many communities had none. So a certain amount of toleration was extended to them by the time of the Awakening.

It was quite another thing for a group of Congregationalists to split off en bloc and form a rival church in a community. Such an action would destroy the parish way, would destroy the social cohesion and would destroy the power and prestige of the established clergy. Those conservatives who had faithfully borne the burdens of the church in the past could not be expected to take kindly to charges of hypocrisy, time serving and departure from the faith from those whose religious emotions and unbalanced zeal had lately been fanned to white heat. Even the thought of open criticism of the minister, perhaps the most respected citizen of the community, in the

meeting house or on the streets was enough to make most faithful Connecticut churchmen shudder. On the other hand, those who had just experienced "the fullness of the grace of God" and whose faith in Christ had blossomed forth into "a joy unspeakable" could not have fellowship with those who looked on their ecstacies as the outgrowth of one of those "phrensies" which periodically afflicted the Christian church.

The situation that developed in Connecticut during the 1740s was the product of a vicious circle of reaction. The separatists had had what to them was a very precious spiritual experience, and they desired to continue in their worship on a higher emotional plane than they previously had been accustomed. Their ministers, who were themselves New Light for the most part, became increasingly fearful of emotionalism and physical demonstration in the church services. As they drew back from such demonstration, they were increasingly criticized by some of their parishoners. As the ministers increasingly became the targets of barbs hurled by the more emotional and demonstrative sort, they in turn became more extreme in their reaction. Thus the gulf widened between the two groups, each becoming more severe toward the other until church splits seemed inevitable.

With religious excitement at great heat, with itinerant preachers (some of them laymen) moving about at will, and with separate meetings occurring in many places, some action seemed necessary. The General Assembly, prompted by a group of ministers had forbidden itinerancy in 1742. Then, as separates tried to claim the benefit of the Connecticut Toleration Act of 1708, the Assembly was increasingly hard put to it to prove that the law did not encompass Congregationalists and decided to

take extreme action. In 1743 they repealed the Toleration Act, but they did provide that dissenters could apply to the Assembly for exemption from ecclesiastical laws, but only

> such persons as have any distinguishing character, by which they may be known from the presbyterians or congregationalists, and from the consociated churches established by the laws of this Colony, may expect the indulgence of this Assembly, having first before this Assembly taken the oaths and subscribed the declaration provided in the Act of Parliament in cases of the like nature.[9]

The results were as might be expected. The laws simply aggravated the separatistic tendencies of the New Lights and gave rise to a party of political New Lights which ultimately overthrew the existing political clique.

Now that the separates had lost their religious rights, they were threatened with loss of civil rights as well. The Assembly, the courts and the churches all sought to take action against the separates, who were no longer allowed to hold official positions. Three were expelled from the Legislature for being members of separate churches, even though they were respected citizens duly elected by their townsmen. They were Captain Obadiah Johnson of Canterbury, Captain Thomas Stevens, Sr., of Plainfield, and Captain Nathan Jewett of Lyme.[10] Separates were also turned out of their positions as justices of the peace, and the law was especially hard on separate ministers. Marriages and baptisms performed by these men for their own parishoners were declared illegal on the ground that qualified civil officers were required for such acts. Both Solomon Paine of

[9] Charles J. Hoadly (ed.), The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut (Hartford: Case, Lockwood and Brainard, 1870), VIII, 521-22.

[10] Isaac Backus, A History of New England (Newton, Mass.: Backus Historical Society, 1871), II, 80.

Canterbury and Thomas Stevens, Jr., of Plainfield were imprisoned in Windham jail for conducting wedding ceremonies in their respective separate churches.[11] For exhorting their people without permission of the standing minister of the parish, several separate ministers were also imprisoned; for they were not recognized as ministers of their congregations under the law. At Hartford, Ebenezer Frothingham was imprisoned for five months, John Paine for eleven months, and John Palmer from September, 1747, to January, 1748.[12] Deacon Thomas Marsh of Mansfield was seized by an officer on January 5, 1746, the day before his scheduled ordination, for preaching the gospel without a license and confined in jail in Windham until the meeting of the county court the following June. An indication of the spirit in which Frothingham took his persecution appears in a letter sent while in prison, presumably to Rev. James Lockwood of Wethersfield:

> . . . it is Evident to me as Seen by the teaching of gods spirit & his word and your fruits--that you are an open Enemy to God and his Children & have the mark of the Beast in your forehead you are pulling down the Just vengeance of God upon you & your family from day to day . . . unless you are Converted & God give you Repentance you will shortly be cursed Down Down to the Bottomless pit among Devils and Damned Spirits to welter out a whole Eternity of torment . . .[13]

Furthermore, sons of separates were forbidden access to established colleges (the Cleveland brothers of Canterbury were expelled from Yale in

[11] Larned, I, 478.

[12] Backus, II, 80.

[13] Quoted in Henry R. Stiles, History of Ancient Wethersfield, Connecticut (New York: Grafton Press, 1904), p. 599. This vituperative language and lack of literary style were not typical of Frothingham's writing, as his long and reasonably dignified works Articles of Faith and Practice and A Key to Unlock the Door indicate.

1745 as David Brainerd had been in 1741); and the law did not permit the founding of separate schools.

To prevent any religious meetings from being held on Sunday other than those allowed and established by the ecclesiastical constitution, a law that enabled county courts to grant permission to hold religious meetings of other types was repealed. Thereafter people were subject to penalties if they did not attend parish worship services.[14] A good illustration of what this legal revision could mean occurred in Saybrook. There in 1744 fourteen members of a separatist group were arrested for "holding a meeting contrary to law on God's holy Sabbath day." They were arraigned, fined and driven through deep mud for twenty-five miles on foot to New London where they were thrown into prison for refusing to pay their fines. Left without fire, food or beds, there they remained for weeks, dependent on neighboring Baptists for food and other comforts.[15]

While the political and religious establishments of Connecticut sought to deprive separates of all civil and religious rights, they sought at the same time to extract from them every shilling due for support of the established ministers. On principle, separates refused to contribute to what they considered to be false worship, but the law was against them. Thus the high principles they enunciated about a pure church and true worship when they separated themselves from the standing churches degenerated into a squabble over rates. Many are the instances of individuals

[14] An Historical Narrative and Declaration . . . of Strict Congregational Churches Convened by Delegation at Killingly (Providence: Bennett Wheeler, 1781), p. 9.

[15] George L. Clark, A History of Connecticut (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1914), p. 273.

having their goods forcibly taken from them to pay their ecclesiastical rates, and many were thrown into jail for refusing to pay or for inability to pay.

At Norwich the number of separatists was considerable; at one period they out-voted the standing regular church and declared they would not support a minister by a tax. The other party appealed to the Legislature and obtained an order to enforce the rates. Violent commotions occurred when efforts were made to collect for the support of Mr. Lord, and no less than forty were imprisoned on this account in one season.[16] One of the most touching cases at Norwich was that of Isaac Backus' mother. The elderly lady was snatched from her home by a collecter when she was ill and wrapped in blankets by the fire on a cold winter night in 1752. Taken to an unheated prison, she suffered with many other separatists for thirteen days until her grandson, General Jedidiah Huntington, paid her tax for the support of the standing church.[17] Miss Caulkins observes, "There was perhaps no town in the colony where the conflict between the standing order, supported by the civil authority, and the enthusiasts, was more vehement and protracted than at Norwich."[18]

Windham jail witnessed plenty of activity too. So many separatists were incarcerated there that a second story was added to the jail, and that being inadequate, a new jail was ordered in 1753. Some strange scenes

[16] Frances M. Caulkins, History of Norwich, Connecticut (Hartford: Friends of the Author, 1874), pp. 195-96.

[17] S. Leroy Blake, The Separates or Strict Congregationalists of New England (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1902), p. 161; Backus, II, 98-9.

[18] Caulkins, Norwich, p. 323.

must have taken place there. In a weaker moment county officials gave permission to Elisha Paine to preach from his jail cell, and "philanthropist" Joshua Abbe of North Windham helped build bleachers out of county lumber to accommodate the crowds that came to hear.[19] Of course, most of those imprisoned at Windham had refused to pay their ecclesiastical rates. In some instances goods of recalcitrants were taken and sold; in other instances they themselves were thrown in prison. "This was done by mere force. They would neither go themselves nor ride; they were held upon horses by main strength, and would cry out and scream until the blood ran out at their mouths."[20]

Many appeals came out of these imprisonments, but one of the most expressive was sent by Alexander Miller, separate minister at Voluntown, his brother Peter and Joseph Spalding of Plainfield from the Windham jail to the Assembly on May 13, 1752:

> Whereas, we are rendered incapable upon the account of sickness and imprisonment, of sending a petition, we take this opportunity of informing your Honors of the difficulties we have met with as to our outward man because we are constrained to observe and follow the dictates of our own conscience, agreeable to the Word of God, in matters of religion, looking upon it to be God's prerogative to order the affairs of his own worship. We are of that number who soberly dissented from the Church established by Connecticut and though we have no design to act in contempt of any lawful authority, or to disturb any religious society, but only to worship God according to the rules he has given us in his Word in that way now called Separation, yet have we suffered the loss of much of our goods, particularly because we could not in conscience pay minister's rates, it appearing to us very contrary to the way that the Lord hath ordained even the present way in which ministry are maintained--Poor men's estates taken away and sold for less than a quarter of their value, and no overplus returned, as hath been the case of your Honor's poor informers; yea, poor men's cows taken when they had but

[19] Goen, p. 81.

[20] Benjamin Trumbull, A Complete History of Connecticut (New Haven: Maltby, Goldsmith & Co., 1818), II, 234.

> one for the support of their families, and the children crying for milk and could get none, because the collector had taken their cow for minister's rates. Neither have they stopped here, though we have never resisted them, but when our goods could no longer suffice we were taken from our families and cast into prison, where some of us have lain above two months, far distant from our families, who are in very difficult circumstances. Yea! and here we must unavoidably lie the remainder of our days unless we consent to such methods for which we can see no warrant in God's Word. No! surely it never came into his mind, neither hath he commanded that it should be so, that the Gospel of Peace should be so maintained; he hath told his ministers how they shall have their maintenance, but not a word of imprisoning men for refusing to maintain them, surely the best things corrupted from the worst. And now, we pray you to take notice of our difficulties, and grant us relief from bondage that we may enjoy the privileges other dissenters enjoy.[21]

The Assembly took no more notice of this pathetic appeal than they did of the many others sent them for relief from rates. Even when in 1748 Solomon Paine and Matthew Smith collected 330 signatures of separatists in Windham and New London Counties to an appeal for relief by the General Assembly, that august body dismissed the petition.[22] This time, however, they at least allowed Paine to read the petition before the Assembly. A good example of what forced rate collecting might mean in an individual case is well illustrated by the misfortunes of Obadiah Johnson of Canterbury from whom were taken in successive years "a yoke of oxen, a good cow and calf, three good fat hogs, two good cows," for the support of Mr. Cogswell.[23]

While legal action was being taken against separatists on county and colonial levels, a more irenic approach was followed by some of the standing church bodies. In Windham County, for instance, the associated ministers

[21] Larned, I, 479.

[22] Larned, I, 482.

[23] Larned, I, 478.

of the county sent A Letter . . . to the People in the Said County in 1745. This missive acknowledged the work of God in the revival but asserted that "subtle Powers of Darkness" had sowed "Tares in the Field, and execute their wicked Designs" to lead many to false notions of the nature of regeneration and of many other things as well.[24] The document then went on to deal with the errors of the separatists and to refute them. In trying to turn the general populace away from separatism, it concluded, "The Work of Sanctification lies not in the Flights of your Passion and Affections, much less in the Fire of a bitter and Party Zeal, nor spending your Time or Passions in lamenting that others don's see and think as you do in all things . . ."[25] Two years later the Consociation of Windham County published another report dealing with queries regarding divisions, errors and separations. The bulk of the report dealt with the Confession of the Mansfield Separate Church and with some notes on the Confession of the Canterbury Separate Church. The conclusion of the Consociation was that wherever these points of doctrine differ from those of the standing church they tend to err and that the council feels it necessary to warn against these evils.[26] In regard to the emotional manifestations observable in those two congregations, the council observed that not one minister in the county approved of outcries and bodily agitations.[27]

The Windham County ministers and others who sought to handle the separatists by literary means did not go unchallenged. No doubt the

[24] A Letter from the Associated Ministers of the County of Windham to the People in the Said County (Boston: J. Draper, 1745), p. 5.

[25] A Letter from the Associated Ministers, p. 52.

[26] The Result of a Council of the Consociated Churches of the County of Windham . . .(Boston: J. Draper, 1747), pp. 16, 20.

[27] Result of a Council, p. 22.

chief literary spokesman for the separatists was Ebenezer Frothingham, who produced his first major work of 450 pages in 1750. Entitled The Articles of Faith and Practice, with the Covenant, That is Confessed by the Separate Churches of Christ in General in This Land. With a Discourse, Treating upon the Great Privileges of the Church of Jesus Christ, the book devoted only about a score of pages to a statement of faith and then went on to deal with the many injustices done the separates and to score the whole ecclesiastical establishment. How much Frothingham's first book did for the separatist cause is hard to say. It did present a respectable confession of faith and it drew plenty of fire from his opponents. While Frothingham was not so timid as to require seventeen years to collect enough courage to go to press again for the cause of religious liberty, his next major work did not come out until 1767. Half as long as his previous work, it was entitled A Key to Unlock the Door, That Leads in, to Take a Fair View of the Religious Constitution, Established by Law, in the Colony of Connecticut. As to his thesis, Frothingham stated, "The main Thing I have in View thro' the Whole of this Book is free Liberty of Conscience--the Right of thinking, choosing and acting for one's self in Matters of Religion, which respects God and Conscience. . ."[28] He argued that at the Judgment Day no one can plead for his neighbor when God executes his strict justice. So it is unreasonable for civil or ecclesiastical powers to deprive their neighbors of free exercise of their conscience in manners of their soul's concerns.[29] Then he proceeded to deal

[28] Ebenezer Frothingham, A Key to Unlock the Door . . . (New Haven: n. p., 1767), p. v.

[29] Frothingham, A Key, p. 46.

with all the laws of the colony regarding the establishment of religion and refuted them. One of Frothingham's greatest worries was that the right of unconverted persons to vote in society meetings concerning the call of a minister to the local church would open the ministry to unconverted men.[30]

Of forced rate paying there was plenty, of imprisonments there were many, of appeals to county and colonial officials there were not a few. As these appeals continued to fall on deaf ears, there was an increasing build-up among separatists for united appeal and action. In January of 1753 Paul Park of Preston called for a union of separate churches to gain recognition under the toleration act of Connecticut. In March a conclave of churches met at Norwich and decided first to make one more effort to persuade the General Assembly to grant them toleration. If that appeal fell on deaf ears they would then address themselves to London.[31] In April agents of twenty-three separate churches presented a memorial to the General Assembly, praying for benefit of the Toleration Act. The petition read in part:

> That we do carry on the worship of God as we in conscience think agreeable to the Word of God, and think it unequal to be compelled to support others. It is against our consciences that ministers' salaries be dependent on human laws. We pray for the benefit of the Toleration Act; we are imprisoned, our property is taken, from which burdens we pray to be released.[32]

[30] Frothingham, A Key, p. 168.

[31] "Records of the Preston Separate Church," in Ruby P. Anderson (ed.), The Parke Scrapbook (Baltimore: Port City Press, Inc., 1965), pages not numbered.

[32] The Bi-Centennial Celebration of the First Congregational Church of Preston, Connecticut, 1698-1898 (Preston: Published by the Society, 1900), p. 20; Larned, I, 483.

Although this appeal represented 1,000 church members, it was coolly ignored.[33]

Having already committed themselves to a course of action, the separatists met again in June to draft a memorial to be sent to England. Solomon Paine and Ebenezer Frothingham were chosen to represent the churches in London. Paine died before the mission could be carried out, and the project languished for two more years. Then in April of 1756, twenty separate churches delegated Bliss Willoughby, pastor of the Newent church, and Moses Morse, a Preston physician, to carry a petition to England. This petition claimed to represent about one thousand loyal adult British citizens who were faithful in attending public worship properly supervised by ministers but who were persecuted for not supporting the established worship of Connecticut. The petitioners represented their treatment as a violation of the Act of Toleration of 1689 and specifically requested: (1) that hereafter none of them be hindered from worshiping with likeminded separatists; (2) that hereafter none of them be hindered from building meeting houses or fined for not attending services of the established church of the colony; (3) that hereafter none of them be taxed for support of the established church.[34]

Upon arrival in London Willoughby and Morse contacted the Parliamentary Committee for Dissenters who espoused their cause but advised that in the present attitude of the Crown toward the colony an appeal to the King

[33] Clark, p. 273.

[34] Frederic Denison, Notes on the Baptists . . . in Norwich, Connecticut (Norwich: Manning, 1857), pp. 32-36.

might be a pretext for annulment of the colonial charter.[35] So the messengers did not carry the appeal further. The Committee advised the memorialists to begin a civil suit for their rights and appeal the suit to England. And Dr. Benjamin Avery, chairman of the Committee, sent with the memorialists a letter censuring the conduct of the Connecticut Government. When Governor Fitch tried to excuse actions of Connecticut officials on the grounds of the excesses of the separatists, Dr. Avery replied, "that civil penalties were not the appropriate remedy for spiritual disorders . . ."[36] This judgment, the pressure of the separatists and demands of a new foreign war reduced the will of the Government to deal as harshly with separatists as before. Concerning the impact of war as a factor in decline of persecution Coons observes:

> The French wars, culminating in the Seven Years' War (1756-1763), brought laxity in religious interest and lowered standards of morality. Many a Connecticut lad returned from the wars to find himself strangely indifferent to spiritual matters, and with an outlook distinctly altered by his contacts with freethinkers among the British and French soldiers.[37]

Those who were not themselves very deeply religious were not likely to enforce ecclesiastical regulations against others.

Persecution was also moderated by the fact that the New Lights gradually took political control during the late 1740s. While the Old Lights were losing their hold, the ecclesiastical laws of the colony were in the hands of a revision committee (1742-50), the membership of which included future governor Roger Wolcott, Thomas Fitch, Jonathan Trumbull

[36] Larned, I, 483.

[37] Paul W. Coons, The Achievement of Religious Liberty in Connecticut (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1936), p. 18.

and John Bulkley, judge of the Superior Court. When the revision was finally issued in 1750, the oppressive legislation of 1742 and 1743 was quietly dropped, but responsibility for support of the establishment was as firmly entrenched as ever.[38] In fact, dropping of the oppressive legislation was primarily to protect the record against complaints to England. The spirit of oppression had not changed.

The severity of the law was gradually relaxed until in May of 1777 the Assembly gave the separatists the liberty they had so long sought. According to the law of that date, a separatist could be exempted from paying rates to support the ministry or the building of an established church; but of course he could not vote in society meetings, except in such meetings dealing with granting taxes for the support and regulation of schools. To qualify for exemption, separatists' names had to be sent by their churches to the clerk of the society in which they lived during each October, with a certificate to the effect that they had attended church and contributed to its support. The law concluded:

> That all such churches and congregations of separatists as aforesaid shall have and enjoy full liberty to use and exercise the same powers and privileges for the maintaining and supporting their respective ministers, building and repairing meeting-houses for divine worship, as the ecclesiastical societies established by the laws of this State have and do enjoy and exercise; and in the same way and manner may commence, warn and hold their meetings, and direct their proceedings from time to time as occasion shall require for the purpose aforesaid.[39]

Finally in 1784, when new ecclesiastical legislation was passed, all

[38] M. Louise Greene, The Development of Religious Liberty in Connecticut (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1905), pp. 269, 275.

[39] Charles J. Hoadly (ed.), Public Records of the State of Connecticut (Hartford: Case, Lockwood and Brainard Co., 1894), I, 232-33.

reference to the Saybrook Platform was omitted, though everyone must still support the Gospel and the Congregational clergy were still in a vague way the standing order. Not until the constitution of 1818 was the Congregational Church completely disestablished in Connecticut.

The separatists had won toleration but too late to do them much good. Few of their congregations survived as long as 1777. The Killingly Declaration of 1781 failed to put new life into the movement. The last general meeting of separate churches was held in 1797 at Lyme. Apparently by that time separate churches were so few and weak that annual meetings were no longer of importance or value.[40] In the bitter struggles with church and state they had suffered much and had lost in the sense that they passed from the stage of history. But their sacrifice had not been in vain, for they had struck an important blow for the cause of religious liberty in Connecticut and thus in the United States.

What the Separatists Believed

Down through the history of the Christian church, religiously ascendant groups have sought to cast minority sects in an unfavorable light, sometimes even to portray them as heretics. The standing church of Connecticut followed true to form in its treatment of the separatists from the Congregational church. Both individual ministers and church bodies made pronouncements against the separatists in which they made accusations of irregularity in theology and practice. It is questionable, however, how seriously these charges are to be taken. If one reads the

[40] Preston Bi-Centennial Celebration, p. 22.

articles of faith penned by Ebenezer Frothingham,[41] chief apologist for the separatists, the several known confessions of faith of separate churches, or the confession set forth by the Killingly Convention of separate churches, he looks in vain for heresy. The Killingly Convention asserted that the churches represented there had always followed the Westminster Confession of Faith:

> As Churches, we have ever acknowledged Westminster Confession of Faith; and Cambridge Platform of Church Discipline, as to the Substance of them (some few things excepted) to be orthodox Systems of Faith, and Practice.[42]

It is important to note here that the separates did not come out of the original churches so much over differences of doctrine as of administration or practice. Blake concluded that with respect to alleged errors among the separatists he did not find that they preached or propagated them and they never taught contrary to sound doctrine.[43]

It is well enough to assert that the separatists did not preach heresy, but their contemporaries accused them of doing so. It is necessary therefore to deal with these charges and to point out how the separatists differed from the standing churches. The associated ministers of Windham County attacked five specific errors at the beginning of their letter to the churches of the county in 1745: 1. That it was the will of God to have a pure church on earth and that the converted should

[41] Frothingham's two extensive works provide an opportunity to examine in detail the views and rationale of the separatist movement in Connecticut. They are The Articles of Faith and Practice (452 pages) and A Key to Unlock the Door (252 pages).

[42] Killingly Declaration, p. 17.

[43] Blake, p. 65.

be separated from unconverted in the churches. 2. That the saints certainly know who are converted and who are Christ's true ministers. 3. That no other call to the ministry is necessary than a conversion experience and an inner conviction that it was the will of God to preach. 4. That God disowns the churches and the ministry of Connecticut. 5. That at meetings of lay preaching and exhorting there is more of the presence of God than in the standing churches.[44]

The Windham ministers then sought to answer these teachings. They argued that it is impossible to have a pure church. Even among the Apostles there was a Judas; in the Jewish church the whole nation was incorporated into it; and in the Parable of the Tares (Matthew 13), the tares are not to be rooted up lest the wheat be rooted up also. As to knowing who is converted, they asserted that one can know who commits scandalous sins or holds wrong doctrines, but one cannot know who may be a secret hypocrite. As to the call of the ministry and the presbyterian establishment, they pointed out that the Apostles had exercised great care in providing for a succession of ministers in the churches they planted. Special instructions are given in Scripture concerning proof of ministerial qualifications. The institution of the ministry and qualifications for it came by the illumination of the Spirit and this institution would not now be cast aside by the Spirit of God. The superiority of lay preaching was especially attacked. They asserted that attendance at meetings conducted by lay preachers was accompanied by carnal joy, bitterness and pride. This emotional experience cannot be of God since it often produces "strange

[44] A Letter from the Associated Ministers, p. 5.

bitterness of spirit toward others, treating opposers with a rashness that tends to hardness and prejudices their minds . . ."[45] The Windham ministers concluded: "The Work of Sanctification lies not in the Flights of your Passion and Affections, much less in the Fire of a bitter and Party Zeal, nor spending your Time or Passions in lamenting that others don't see and think as you do in all things . . ."[46]

Two years later a council of the consociated churches of Windham County met to deal with questions regarding divisions, errors and separations in the churches. The Consociation took a hard look at the confessions of the Mansfield and Canterbury Separate churches. They did not think that the Mansfield people were quite orthodox on the doctrine of the Trinity, and it appeared that they believed in the possibility of complete sanctification in this life.[47] A study of the Mansfield confession does not, however, leave one with a clear conviction that the Consociation was accurate on either of these points. The authors of the Mansfield document obviously suffered from a lack of theological knowledge and ability to express themselves in precise theological terms. On other points, the Consociation did not like the idea that the Mansfielders thought they in particular were elect, that experience served in some sense as the ground of an article of faith, and that the local church was completely independent--a position leading to confusion and disorder.

[45] A Letter from the Associated Ministers, p. 45.

[46] A Letter from the Associated Ministers, p. 50. See pp. 18-50 for an expanded view of their attitude toward the separate churches on points summarized above.

[47] The Result of a Council, pp. 10-12.

Moreover, the standing church objected that the separatists at Mansfield permitted members to participate in or refrain from the practice of infant baptism, as they preferred. Such a compromise they described as basing doctrine on convenience rather than on the word of God.[48] The Consociation found the Canterbury Confession to be deficient in several respects but were particularly upset by the Separate doctrine of assurance and by their belief in two meanings in the Bible: a doctrinal meaning and a spiritual meaning available by special revelation to separatists. The former involved an internal indisputable persuasion on the part of the individual that Christ had died for him and that he possessed spiritual life and salvation through Christ.[49]

Whether one reads the confession of the Mansfield or Canterbury church, the Articles of Ebenezer Frothingham, the doctrinal formula promulgated by the Killingly Convention or some other separatist declaration, the viewpoint is essentially the same. The salient points of separatist teaching criticized above were the main points of difference between them and the standing order. There were errors committed by the separatists in terms of unchristian contentions, some opposition to a learned ministry, irregularities in performing church discipline and allegorical interpretation of Scripture. These were freely admitted by the Killingly Convention.[50] But differences in doctrine or practice between the separatists and the standing order were essentially the

[48] The Result of a Council, pp. 10, 14, 16.

[49] The Result of a Council, p. 17.

[50] Killingly Declaration, p. 13.

differences between early Congregationalism and a more sophisticated or institutionalized form of Congregationalism.

The separates seceded from churches on the Saybrook Platform, a presbyterian form of church government, and were therefore called "Separatists." They preferred the name "Strict Congregationalist." In brief, they held vital and unchangeable those old and distinctive doctrines of the Congregationalists: childlike and mystical faith in God and in the Bible as the word of God, a converted church membership and the independence of the local church. Like the early Congregationalists they believed a person should give a clear relation of his experience of conversion before joining the church, and infant baptism was only for the children of those who had made such a profession. The church was a company of the redeemed, regularly purified through careful discipline, and was independent of other churches but could and should seek the fellowship of such churches. The congregation of a church had the sole right and responsibility in regard to choice and installation of church officers. They went a little further than some of the early Congregationalists, however, in their insistence that civil power under the Gospel Dispensation was not entrusted with the support of the Gospel; a church should be supported by voluntary contributions. They went a little further, too, in the insistence on the right of laymen to use their spiritual gifts for the edification of their brethren.[51] And they were emotional, sometimes to the extent of fanaticism, in their religious fervor. Along with this tendency went an inclination to base some of their views of Christian

[51] They were certainly not beyond many of the generation of Oliver Cromwell in this regard, however.

practice on experience almost as much as on Scripture. It was this extreme mystical thrust that led sometimes to an allegorical interpretation of Scripture--which would permit them to find in the Bible the kind of truth they wanted to find there.

It should be reiterated that primarily the differences between the standing order and the separatists lay in the area of practice rather than in doctrine. As the eighteenth century wore on, with the tendency to drop the Half-Way Covenant and to loosen the presbyterial control in the established churches and the tendency to less emotionalism in the separate churches, there was really nothing to prevent a reunion of the Strict Congregational churches with those from which they had withdrawn. Both groups had held the traditional Calvinistic position on the nature of God, creation, the fall of man, the atonement, election, redemption and other basic doctrines.

Social and Economic Status of the Separatists

Were the separatists a goulash of humanity, flotsam and jetsam cast on the shores of Connecticut by the high tides of the excitement of the Awakening? A number of commentators seem to think so. Typical is a comment by Miss Larned:

> The Separate movement swept through the lowest stratum of society, in a day of comparative ignorance and imperfect civilization, taking in not only the ignorant, fanatical and visionary, cranks of every variety, but the sore-heads, the grumbletonians; all who for any cause were brought into opposition to constituted authorities.[52]

[52] Ellen D. Larned, Historic Gleanings in Windham County, Connecticut (Providence: Preston & Rounds Co., 1899), p. 38. As noted in the discussion below, however, Miss Larned recognizes the fact that not all separates were from the lower classes.

To be sure the separatists were the religious radicals of their day, but is there any reason why some of the most respected members of a community should not become disenchanted with Connecticut's religious establishment or tired of their pastor or enamored with some of the heady ideas of liberty in matters of religion proclaimed by the separatists? It is hard for men in a contemporary pluralistic and materialistic society to appreciate the fact that early eighteenth century New England was still a religious community, in which one might sacrifice business for ideals or religious scruples, and that people of all walks of life (especially the more educated) might chafe greatly under the ministry of a preacher who had been holding forth for thirty or forty years or more in the only church in town!

An effort to determine how the social and economic structure of the separatist churches compared with that of the community as a whole would require detailed examination of the membership of every separate church. The degree to which it is still possible to produce at least partial membership lists of many of the separate churches is quite remarkable. But to produce biographies and financial records for such individuals is quite another matter. The writers of local history and the genealogists frequently comment on the founder of a family or the members of a family prominent in a community when they wrote during the latter eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries. Or they may give a complete family tree. In the latter instance birth and death dates are frequently missing, and individuals of the same name appear in successive generations as names are passed on from father to son. Therefore, probate records and other useful materials are virtually impossible to sort out. Moreover,

the use of wills and estate inventories is risky business in interpretation of this kind because a person's fortunes may greatly improve or decline from the middle to the latter part of his life. In a few instances where it was possible to check on an individual's estate, his net worth at the time of the Awakening was found to differ considerably from that at the end of his life. Therefore, this extremely time-consuming task was discontinued.

In spite of all the difficulties, some assessment of the status of the separatists in their community can be made. To start at the bottom of the ladder, "The separation in Windham evidently embraced a very lawless and disreputable element . . . ,"[53] and probably did not include families of the better sort. Elsewhere separatists monopolized the community. In South Killingly, as has been noted, nearly the whole population joined the separate church. Thus, whatever social stratification existed in the community also occurred in the church. The fifth parish of Norwich, Bozrah, also fell almost entirely into the hands of separatists for a time, so what was true of South Killingly would be true there. Likewise, the separate church in Preston took such a large part of the membership of the standing church that it left the standing church to limp along in a decadent condition. From indications available, one would conclude that the separate church had at least its share of the better sort in the community. Dr. Moses Morse, Preston physician (native of Massachusetts), joined the separate church in the year of its founding and two years later,

[53] Larned, History, I, 459.

in 1751, was ordained a deacon there.[54]

Samuel Orcutt, historian of New Milford, reports that many of the separatists there were leading citizens in the community. Joseph Ruggles and William Drinkwater, leaders in the schism, were "men of ability, means and public influence." The former was a partner in an iron works and captain in the Connecticut militia. Benajah Stone, another member of the congregation, owned 270 acres in the area about the time of the separation from the standing church. Gamaliel Baldwin, son of Deacon Israel Baldwin, sold a piece of property in the town for 1,500 pounds in 1748. Another outstanding member was Captain Isaac Bostwick of the militia. Long an influential man in town, town treasurer and owner of a mill property, he led the first company from New Milford to serve in the Revolutionary War.[55]

F. O. Allen, able historian of Enfield, likewise testifies to the quality of the separates there:

> It has been supposed that the Separates of Enfield were poor, ignorant, shallow persons who separated from the Established Church to enjoy more freely religious hysterics and disorderly physical demonstrations in their worship. To correct this impression one should . . . look at lists of Enfield Separates . . . . [which include two captains and a lieutenant in the Connecticut militia, the town clerk] . . . and others of equally high character . . . certainly among the best citizens of Enfield.[56]

Miss Larned also speaks well of the separates in Scotland (Windham,

[54] Phillips, p. 31.

[55] Samuel Orcutt, History of New Milford and Bridgewater, Connecticut, 1703-1882 (Hartford: Case, Lockwood & Brainard, 1882), pp. 191-200.

[56] Francis O. Allen (ed.), The History of Enfield, Connecticut (Lancaster, Pa.: The Wickersham Printing Co., 1900), II, 1526. Items in brackets are discussed by Allen.

third parish): "This Scotland Separate church was organized in the summer of 1746 and soon gained a very respectable position, receiving to its membership some of the leading families in the parish."[57]

Not a great deal is known of the status of members of the Voluntown Separate Church, but some light is thrown on their economic position because of their involvement in the Susquehanna Company. Connecticut had never surrendered her chartered right to a strip of land forty leagues wide, extending all the way to the Pacific. Some eastern Connecticut people decided to make good on part of this claim and made plans to plant a colony in the Susquehanna Valley. On March 29, 1753, a group of men living in five Windham County towns memorialized the General Assembly of Connecticut for permission to launch this project. Apparently the group received sufficient encouragement to proceed with plans and incorporated as the Susquehanna Company later in the year, expanding their membership considerably. In fact, persons from all counties of the colony were involved within the next year or so. The French and Indian War suspended implementation of the scheme, which required approval from the Crown because permission to plant such a colony was beyond the jurisdiction of Connecticut. Of relevance to the present discussion is the fact that seven of the memorialists of March 29, 1753, were members of the Voluntown Separate Church: Captain Isaac Gallup, Thomas Douglas, Peter Miller, Matthew Patrick, Samuel Smith, Benjamin Parke and Robert Hunter.[58] These

[57] Larned, History, I, 462.

[58] Larned, History, I, 556-58; Records of Voluntown and Sterling Congregational Church, pp. 65-9. Possibly more than seven of the Voluntown separatists were members of the company, but the church membership list is incomplete.

had to be men of at least slight means because shares in the company had to be purchased, and the memorialists had promised the Assembly that they would buy the land in question from the Indians. There were not many men with liquid capital in that area in those days. A further note of interest is that Captain Isaac Gallup (officer in the Connecticut militia) represented Voluntown in the General Assembly in 1753, the year this scheme was submitted.

Miss Larned testifies that in Plainfield and Canterbury separates included a majority of the respectable families of the community.[59] In fact, the majority of the town in the former and the majority of the church in the latter was New Light, and most of the Canterbury congregation had moved over into the separate church there. Probably the most illustrious member of the Canterbury congregation was Elisha Paine, another of the transplanted sons of Pilgrim Independents that helped to swell the separate movement in eastern Connecticut. Born on Cape Cod, he had moved with his family to Canterbury and became a very successful lawyer through private study. Backus described him as "one of the greatest lawyers in Connecticut" and a very prosperous man.[60] He was not only a justice of the peace when the revival hit Canterbury in 1741, but was a justice of the quorum for the county court of Windham.[61] Though converted in the Windham revival of 1721, he was now stirred anew and became an itinerant serving the various separate churches. Elisha's brother, Solomon Paine,

[59] Larned, Historic Gleanings, p. 39.

[60] Backus, II, 64.

[61] Windham County Court Records, V, 1; on deposit at the Connecticut State Library.

later pastor of the Canterbury separates, was representative from Canterbury to the General Assembly when Whitefield came through Connecticut in 1740. And John and Ebenezer Cleveland, students at Yale until expelled for attending a separate meeting, were other members of the congregation. Only the most outstanding or most wealthy members of a community could obtain a college education in these days. Just five Canterbury citizens, including the Clevelands, went to Yale or any other college between 1719 and 1750.[62]

Miss Frances M. Caulkins, able historian of Norwich, says of the separates there, "They had among them several of the most wealthy and respectable men in the Society."[63] In fact, the separates were so numerous in Norwich that at one period they outvoted the standing regular church and declared they would not support a minister by tax, which assertion brought action of the Legislature to enforce the rates.[64] Fortunately, for Norwich we have a means of knowing exactly how some of the separates compared economically with other members of the congregation. There is on file in the Connecticut State Library a rate book for the First Congregational Church of the town for the year 1742. By this means it can be determined how much each church member was assessed for the support of his church during that year. Assessment was, of course, according to one's wealth. Of the 265 named, one was taxed 14 pounds, one at 12 pounds, three at 9, two at 8, five at 7, seven at 6, sixteen at 5, eighteen at 4,

[62] Larned, History, I, 572-73.

[63] Caulkins, Norwich, p. 194.

[64] Caulkins, Norwich, p. 323.

and the rest at lesser amounts. There were ten male separates in the initial group to be excommunicated. Of these, three were in the 5 pound category and one in the 4 pound pategory; the rest were charged lesser amounts. For some reason, one of the men, Isaac Backus, had a blank opposite his name. This is unfortunate because it would be very interesting to know what the comparative wealth of this man was at the time. The one at whose house the separate meetings were held, Hugh Calkins, was taxed at almost 6 pounds, but the one called to be their pastor, Jedidiah Hide (Hyde) was assessed at less than a pound.[65] It is clear, then, that while this initial group of seceders did not include the most wealthy members of the congregation, it did include a fairly good cross section of it. Unfortunately, the large group that later left the standing church to join them is not known by name, so no evaluation of the economic standing of the separate church as a whole when it was fully organized can be made. As indicated at the beginning of this unit of study, probate records can be very misleading. For example, William Lathrop, one of the ten separatists mentioned above was taxed a little over one pound in 1742. Yet, when he died in 1778, his estate was inventoried at over 1,699 pounds and included the following parcels of land: 173 acres with house, barn and cooper shop, 6 acres, 57 acres, 52 acres, 13 acres, 4 acres.[66] Moreover, the genealogical record describes him as "a well-to-do farmer."[67] Apparently

[65] First Congregational Church Rate Book, Norwich; on deposit in the Connecticut State Library.

[66] William Lathrop Estate Inventory, Nov. 19, 1778; on file at Connecticut State Library.

[67] Genealogical and Biographical Record of New London, County Connecticut (Chicago: J. H. Beers and Co., 1905), p. 103.

his fortunes improved with length of life.

Unfortunately, few names of the New London separates are known. Five "prominent members" of Adams' congregation constituted the initial secession and included John Curtis, Christopher and John Christophers, and John and Peter Harris.[68] Only two or three other names appear in available materials. Two of the five initial separatists are fairly well known. John Curtis was one of the most wealthy and most respected men in the community when the Great Awakening began. A graduate of Yale in the class of 1719, he had trained for the ministry but did not obtain ordination. About 1731 a commercial association was formed in New London County and was incorporated May, 1732, by the title "New London Society United for Trade and Commerce." Curtis was a leading member and his name appears second in the list of sixty-one corporators. For a while he served as treasurer of the organization. He represented his town in the colonial Legislature on at least four occasions and was for many years a justice of the peace.[69] When in the fall of 1739 there was imminent trouble with Spain and fear over the unfortified condition of New London, John Curtis was one of a committee of five chosen by the inhabitants of the town to memorialize the General Assembly to fortify New London.[70] How diligent he was in handling his business affairs after the revival broke out in New London is not clear. He was a leader in Davenport's bonfire in 1743 and

[68] Frances M. Caulkins, History of New London, Connecticut (New London: H. D. Utley, 1895), p. 452.

[69] Franklin B. Dexter, Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale College, 1701-1745 (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1885), I, 204-206.

[70] Caulkins, New London, p. 385.

was fined for his efforts. In 1748-50 he served as pastor of the separate church in New Haven, and in 1750 went to Hartford for a while to live on land deeded him by his wife's mother. Perhaps his family was able to look after his interests in New Haven. It seems, however, that his fortunes did decline as he spent more time in religious affairs. While his estate inventory has not yet turned up, a record of the division of his real estate in October, 1774, gave 73 acres to a son John, 49 acres to a son Frederick and 40 acres to a daughter Elizabeth, for a total of 162 acres.[71] It seems as if he should have been worth much more, considering his business interests and what he had inherited.

Christopher Christophers was also a leading citizen of New London who joined the separate movement. He was a New London merchant who graduated from Yale in 1737. He had his own wharf and a house near the waterfront. He, too, had helped to organize Davenport's bonfire.[72] In fact, the fire occurred in front of his house. He had been moderator of the First Church and one of the three-member administrative committee of the church.[73] Christophers is another example of the fact that some separatist fortunes declined in later years. His estate inventory, dated April 5, 1776, included a piece of land with house, barn and other buildings and three slaves; the total value was only 485 pounds, still a fair amount for

[71] Estate Settlement of John Curtis, October, 1774; Connecticut State Library.

[72] Dexter, Biographical Sketches, I, 573; "Diary of Joshua Hempstead of New London, Connecticut," Proceedings of the New London County Historical Society, I (1901), 382.

[73] Caulkins, New London, p. 487.

the time and place.[74]

As noted in the account of the founding of White Haven Church in New Haven, the membership of this church outnumbered that of the standing church. It is possible in such a situation that the poorer element seceded, but this does not seem to have been the case. Mary H. Mitchell, historian of the church, says of the original separate group there, "Among them were leading men of New Haven."[75] Had Miss Mitchell listed these "leading men," she no doubt would have included James Pierpont, Samuel Cooke, Captain James Talmadge and Lieutenant Joseph Mix of the colonial militia and John Rhode, a medical doctor.[76] Another of the original members of the separate church was Amos Munson, a 1738 graduate of Yale, who along with several of his even more prominent relatives gave active support to the new church.[77] For the period a few years after the founding of the White Haven church, Goen observes:

> Along with other people of prestige, Roger Sherman, the town's leading citizen, signer of the Declaration of Independence, participant in the Constitutional Convention, treasurer of Yale College, and a prominent man in other ways, was a pillar in the White Haven Church during the ministry of Jonathan Edwards, Jr.[78]

As one reads the records of the separate churches where members signed the covenant or the records of the standing churches where the members penned their signatures for the same reason, he is impressed with

[74] Estate Inventory of Christopher Christophers, April 5, 1776; in Connecticut State Library.

[75] Mary H. Mitchell, History of the United Church of New Haven (New Haven: The United Church, 1942), p. 12.

[76] Records of the White Haven Congregational Church, I, 80.

[77] Dexter, Biographical Sketches, I, 608-9.

[78] Goen, pp. 190-91.

the fact that almost none of the separatists were so illiterate as to be forced to sign by making their mark. Taking into account this and all other evidence concerning the social and economic status of the separatists, one is forced to agree with Goen:

> It is the conclusion of this study that the class structure in most of the Separate churches was about the same as that of the surrounding society. Nearly all of them, notwithstanding emotional extravagance and enthusiastic excess, included members of a fair degree of social elevation for their particular area, as well as many others of lower status.[79]

Why the Separate Movement Died

While the separatist movement of Connecticut had its Zwickau prophets in abundance, it had no Melanchthons. True, men like Elisha Paine had a degree of erudition. A small handful had gone to Yale; but if these men were ever intellectual in outlook, they soon lost such concern or had it smothered in a morass of anti-intellectualism. The group had no scholar or organizer like Melanchthon. They had no creeds or theologies beyond the statements made in church covenants or the Killingly Declaration, which did not come until 1781. They had no training school, were not welcome at Yale, would not have dreamed of going to a "popish" school like William and Mary, and for some reason had almost no interest in Princeton--even though Gilbert Tennent had been active in Connecticut.[80]

[79] Goen, p. 191.

[80] Trinterud says evidence points to the building of William Tennent, Sr.'s "Log College" (forerunner of Princeton) in 1735 and he argues that the education there was not bad for the times and concludes: "As time went on, his /Tennent's/ students as a group proved themselves much better equipped intellectually than the Scotch-Irish subscriptionist group /trained in Scotland/ who so greatly scorned the 'Log College.'"; The Forming of an American Tradition (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1949), pp. 63-5.

The separatists did not seem concerned about preserving or perpetuating what they had gained. And they were torn asunder by strife originating in spiritual quibblings and questions over baptism.

Thus it may be assumed that the primary issues bringing an end to the separate movement were internal. To be sure, persecution by the standing order had its effects; but the churches generally survived such opposition. Lavengood has well said:

> The separatist churches were not killed by laws. If such complete disintegration as soon overtook the separatist congregations had been the result of legislation, it would have been an unusual chapter in the long history of conflict between civil authority and religious conscience, for in the end the victory has been more often with conscience than with law. The separatists perished by their own hands. Their own ignorance and folly, for which no law was responsible, worked their devastation.[81]

If they "perished by their own hands," it should be instructive to look at some of the weapons they used.

When the Connecticut General Assembly legislated out of existence the separate school at the Shepherd's Tent in New London and made it legally impossible for them to set up any other educational institutions, it cut off one of the most important means of separatist self-perpetuation. It is not at all clear, however, that this inability to have schools had much to do with separatist rejection of human learning. Learned men had opposed them and pulled rank on them. Leaders of the movement were almost entirely without college training, and their following also was largely anti-intellectual. It was natural that they should not put much stock in a trained ministry. Without the steadying influence of training

[81] See the unpublished dissertation (Chicago, 1953) by Lawrence G. Lavengood, "The Great Awakening and New England Society," p. 296.

in Biblical languages, theology and the like, the ministers came up with some wierd interpretations of the Bible. They believed that knowledge was a snare; the impulses of the Spirit of God were enough to teach them and lead them into all truth. Comments Miss Larned:

> Thus their spiritual leaders were uneducated and often ignorant men, expounding Scripture according to their own fancy. All parts of the Bible were used indiscriminately. Plain commands were spiritualized and figures taken literally. Dreams and visions supplied the place of dictionary and commentary. Scripture truth was often perverted and misapprehended . . .[82]

With a de-emphasis on knowledge, there was a corresponding emphasis on emotion, often to excess. Bodily effects were often taken as evidences of the working of the Spirit of God. Zeal was frequently measured by the violence of one's actions.

Conducting themselves in this way, the separatists tended to draw to their number many of disreputable character and from the lower class of the people. While in previous pages a case has been made to the effect that social stratification in the separatist churches somewhat approximated that of the standing churches, it must also be remembered that in Windham County and to a large extent in New London County the people as a whole were not a very disciplined or affluent lot. And, as has been noted, some two thirds of the separate churches came from this part of Connecticut. Speaking of the character of the separatists, Miss Larned observes:

> All that from any cause were dissatisfied with the existing churches or civil government joined with the Separates. Compulsory rate paying and church attendance brought them many followers, nor did possession of the key of knowledge keep out from their churches many unworthy members. The "inward actings of their own souls" seldom

[82] Larned, History, I, 469.

> inclined them to reject any one who expressed hostility to the church establishment and Saybrook Platform. Many lawless, turbulent and disorderly spirits were thus received into church membership who could not be kept in check by all their stringency of discipline. These loosely-organized churches, with no fixed standard of discipline and no authority higher than themselves to appeal to, found it wholly impossible to maintain order and decency. Their members were guilty of open and scandalous offences, and attempts at discipline but led to more confusion and anarchy.[83]

It must be made clear that this refers to Windham County more than elsewhere. In some instances separate churches could hardly be differentiated from standing churches. And generally their leaders and many of the members were individuals of high standing.

Unfortunately for them, most separatist groups tended to coalesce around one man, who they accepted as leader. Worse, many of these men had no real leadership ability. Of course some were excellent preachers and pastors, but without an educational program or some other means of obtaining qualified ministers, there could be no perpetuation of an effective leadership. Whether the leaders were good or bad, their fate commonly was the fate of their congregations. Several churches lasted only through the lifetime of their pastor or the term of his service with them. Elisha Marsh, leader of the church in Windham, felt compelled to join the Baptists soon after the Windham Separate Church was organized. When his congregation refused to become Baptists, he left them and the church broke up.[84] After Paul Park died at the end of a long pasterate in Preston, his church did also within a short time. The Separate Church at Franklin (Norwich, second parish) died soon after the removal of their

[83] Larned, History, I, 474.

[84] Blake, p. 178.

pastor in 1759. For other examples of this tragic fact, reference may be made to the earlier discussion of the separate churches. An important fact to keep in mind is that there was virtually no second generation of separate leaders. Worse yet, it seems that the second generation of separatists was not numerous. As the older members died or scattered there were few replacements by birth or conversion. If one can believe the Killingly Declaration, parents were not very faithful to covenant vows made at baptism of their children and the younger generation spent a great amount of time in taverns drinking and carousing around and swearing.[85]

If one were limited to a single fatal error of the separates, it would probably be

> the assumed possession of the 'key of knowledge,' by which they not only had a perfect assurance of their own conversion and eternal salvation, but through 'the inward actings of their own souls' could test the spiritual condition of all with whom they came in contact . . . . The adoption of this pernicious principle wrought incalculable mischief—leading the New Lights to despise human knowledge, to set their own personal impressions against all evidence and authority, and above all to deny the possession of true religion to Christians whose experience varied from their standard.[86]

Their possession of the key of knowledge led them to denounce scathingly the ministry and membership of the established churches. Thus they lost their New Light friends in the standing churches. Almost without exception these men would have nothing to do with them. There are a few examples of individuals like Rev. Samuel Cooke, Sr., of Stratfield who dared to give aid and counsel to the separates in New Haven. But one

[85] Killingly Declaration, p. 37.

[86] Larned, Gleanings, p. 40.

looks in vain for a minister of a standing church to assist in the ordination of a separate minister. Nor would standing ministers sign memorials to the Assembly on behalf of their separated brethren.

This loss of support of like-minded New Lights was bad enough, but when the key of knowledge was turned on the separatists themselves it was even more disastrous. No one was safe from the inward acting of his neighbor's soul. Records are filled with accusations, trials, admonitions and excommunications. Since there was no authority beyond themselves to settle disputes and since they trusted their own impulses and private interpretations of detached passages of Scripture, these loosely-organized congregations quickly fell into scandalous disorder and confusion. The use of the key of knowledge decimated the numbers of the separatists more effectively than any sheriff acting on behalf of the legislature could have done. Within three years of its organization, the Canterbury church had cut off or suspended more than one third of its membership, including former Yale students John and Ebenezer Cleveland who had dared to question the infallibility of the church.[87] This same church was still conducting discipline cases against some of its members late in the century when the church was convulsed in dying gasps. Even the church clerk, Nathan Waldo, was brought into question in 1793.[88] During the same year pastors of the separate churches in Lyme, Preston and Middletown were invited to attend a council at Canterbury to deal with a dispute that had arisen in the

[87] Larned, History, I, 470.

[88] Albert C. Bates (ed.), Records of the Congregational Church in Canterbury Connecticut 1711-1844 (Hartford: Connecticut Historical Society, 1932), p. 116.

church.[89] The Confession of the Mansfield Separate Church declared: "That at all Times the Doors of the Church should be carefully kept against such as cannot give a satisfying Evidence of the Work of God upon their Souls whereby they are united to Christ."[90] While the principle may have been valid, the application of it was so unfortunate that by 1765 only the doors of the church were left. The membership had ceased to exist.

Another important reason for the demise of the separatists was the fact that they were too much like the established churches in doctrine and creed. Therefore, if either side should make moderate changes in its position, there would be little valid reason for separatism to continue. As a matter of fact, both sides made important changes in their position during the ensuing decades of the eighteenth century. Under the influence of New Lights, many church covenants were re-written to agree more fully with separatist viewpoints. In numerous churches the Half-Way Covenant was dropped (but with it there was a tendency to lower the requirements for full membership). Separatists tended to shed their emotionalism, to recognize increasingly how much they had in common with churches of the standing order, and even to evidence a desire for reunion in some instances. On the political side, disabling legislation against the separates was increasingly modified or dropped. Finally in 1784 when the new Laws and Acts of the State of Connecticut in America were produced, all reference to the Saybrook Platform was omitted.[91] With the impediments to union gone,

[89] Bates, p. 117.

[90] The Result of a Council, p. 9.

[91] Greene, p. 338.

separatists did come back in large numbers. Some whole churches joined the standing order. Many individuals went back to the churches from which they seceded either on dissolution of their separate church or before it died.

Disputes over the proper mode and subjects of baptism rocked the separate churches as frequently as questions relating to the application of the "key of knowledge"; and they probably contributed more to the decline and demise of the separate movement. At least three of the separate groups moved bodily into the Baptist communion (Lyme, second parish; Norwich, fifth parish; Enfield). In several other instances significant defections to the Baptists took place. And in almost every separate church there were several individuals who decided for Baptist principles so that there was a steady stream of individual converts going from separate to Baptist ranks. Perhaps as many as one in three of the separate ministers became Baptists.[92]

It is quite natural that close fellowship should develop between the separates and Baptists. They had much in common both in areas of faith and practice. Both held that none but converts should attend the Lord's Supper, that it was possible to know who was a true believer, that saving grace was necessary to preach the gospel, that an elder was not confined to parish boundaries in his work, that the power of discipline was to be exercised by the church, that the Gospel was to be supported without rate or tax (separation of church and state), that public worship should permit the service of laymen and be informal enough to permit the operations of

[92] Allen, II, 1529.

the Spirit of God and that the Bible alone was the source of all faith and practice. Moreover, both groups found themselves outside the Connecticut establishment. But the Baptists could enjoy toleration under the laws of the colony while the separatists could not. Therefore, the separatists depended very heavily on the Baptists at first to privide ordained men to assist in separate ordination services. Elisha and Solomon Paine of Canterbury, Marsh of Mansfield and Stevens of Plainfield were among the separate preachers who labored among the Baptist churches, and Baptists were welcomed in separate pulpits. Some mixed communion churches arose. In these both baptism by immersion and infant baptism were practiced. The closeness of fellowship between separatists and Baptists led many of the former to be persuaded of the correctness of the position of the latter and to join them.

Soon, however, difficulties arose. Baptists increasingly refused to have fellowship with those they deemed unbaptized and separatists, basing their position on the Abrahamic Covenant, refused to re-baptize those sprinkled in infancy. To deal with the subject of the proper mode and subjects of baptism, a council was called at Exeter, Rhode Island, May 23, 1753, with twenty-seven churches represented. It was hoped that out of this conference a way would be found to unite the Baptist and separate churches. Open communion (mixed communion) was the decision arrived at during this meeting.[93] But neither side was really convinced by the council and controversy raged during ensuing months. Solomon Paine was one of those who called for another council to deal with the issue. On May

[93] Larned, History, I, 476.

29, 1754, representatives from twenty-four churches in Connecticut, eight in Massachusetts, seven in Rhode Island and one in Long Island met at Stonington; but the meeting broke up in utter disagreement.[94] The separates now took their stand firmly on the Abrahamic Covenant. While they accepted the condition of a church membership open to believers only, they could not take the next step and accept a baptism exclusively for believers. The Baptists and separates changed from ally status to that of rivals.

The great majority of the separatists held fast to the Abrahamic Covenant. But for some, on a doctrinal basis, it was an easy step from believing that only children of converted should be baptized to believing that no child should be baptized. For others the Baptist church provided a psychological attraction because it constituted a legal fellowship holding views similar to their own. For yet others the Baptist fold held an economic attraction, because members of that faith could qualify for exemption from taxes levied for support of the established church of the colony. And later, as separate churches began to break up, separatists unwilling to return to the old churches from which they had so bitterly separated joined themselves to Baptist churches. The story of the rise of the Baptists in Connecticut is told more at length in the next chapter.

Separatism in Connecticut also tended to die out because substantial numbers of separatists migrated to other colonies. Unwilling longer to suffer humiliation or continued taxation by the Connecticut establishment, they escaped to the freedom of the frontier. So many moved to Vermont and western Massachusetts that they were the dominant element in some

[94] Larned, History, I, 476.

communities. The separate church at Bennington, Vermont (in part settled by separates from the Newent Separate Church in Connecticut) was the first church of any denomination in the colony. Separatists from Canterbury, Windsor and Mansfield also moved to New York and New Jersey, where they established thriving churches. Such migrations were increasingly possible after British conquest of Montreal in 1760 and destruction of the French and Indian threat.[95]

Effects of the Separate Movement

The assessment of cause and effect in historical interpretation is as difficult as in other fields. And in this particular study one must be careful not to give credit to the separates for an effect for which the Great Awakening as a whole or other non-religious factors may have been responsible. As noted above, the struggles of separatism provided a catalyst to propel numerous Connecticut residents toward frontier regions in New England and the Middle Colonies. While economic, social, political and other factors may have played a part, certainly religious concerns were significant in causing these people to move.

Something has been said too about separatist contribution to building up the Baptist church numerically, especially in the generation after the Awakening when separate churches were dying out one by one. But this separatist influx into the Baptist camp fundamentally changed the older Baptist movement in New England. The major part of the Baptist denomination took on a Calvinistic emphasis because these New Lights were invariably

[95] Goen, pp. 107-111; 202, 203.

Calvinists. Moreover, Calvinism among New England Baptists was enhanced by closer ties with Baptists of the Middle Colonies, where Calvinism had long been in the ascendency. A new, vigorous and fast-growing Baptist church came into existence, with the result that while there had been only about a half dozen Calvinistic Baptist churches in New England when Whitefield came through, by the end of the eighteenth century the region boasted 325 Baptist churches, a majority of which were Calvinistic.[96]

The separate movement also contributed to the rise of religious liberty. The existence of a significant number of individuals and churches condemning a state-supported clergy weakened by that much the grip of the state church and called into question a system that had been well established. The commotion raised by the separatists contributed to some of the Anglican defection from Congregationalism, thus increasing religious pluralism in the colony. This pluralism was enhanced with the multiplication of Baptist churches, in part staffed by former members of the standing order. And the pressures exerted and appeals made by the separatists forced the colonial government and the Congregational establishment to relax some of its religious control over the citizenry. Especially significant, of course, was the separate appeal to England in 1756, which sufficiently frightened the establishment so that it grudgingly began to grant some relief to separatists. While full religious liberty was long in coming, directly or indirectly the separatists had much to do with bringing it about.

[96] Edwin S. Gaustad, The Great Awakening in New England (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1965; orig. pub., 1957), pp. 120-21.

Within Congregationalism the separate movement had at least five effects. First, it gave testimony for a pure church, insisting on regenerate membership and contributed to the increasing abrogation of the Half-Way Covenant in the standing churches. Second, and closely related, it helped to save primitive congregationalism, both in terms of an emphasis on regenerate members and leadership and on the autonomy of the local church in matters of government. Third, it helped to reduce formality in worship. The historian of the First Congregational Church in Preston testified that separatism in Preston had had such an effect in that town,[97] and the same apparently was true elsewhere. In many places there was a tendency to greater extemporaneity in preaching and a relaxation in the form of the worship service. Fourth, a new individualism came to the Connecticut religious scene. Lavengood argues:

> By concerning themselves almost completely with the matter of conversion the radical separatists emphasized only the individualistic aspect of New England puritanism, for conversion is an individual experience, not a corporate one. The separatists seemed to be unimpressed with the fact that New England puritanism had steadily insisted on a religiously oriented life for the whole community as the best possible means of producing an individual's conversion. The separatists had little room in their thinking for the community, and apparently had only slight interest in the social utility of conversion. What happened to converts after their conversion was relatively unimportant to the radicals. Conversion itself was the paramount consideration, while the Christian life received scant attention.[98]

Last, "Separatism was, in effect, the alarm that brought the Great Awakening to a halt."[99] An almost solid phalanx of New England

[97] Preston Bi-Centennial Celebration, p. 28.

[98] Lavengood, p. 301.

[99] Lavengood, p. 300.

Congregationalism bore down on emotional outbursts, separatism and other excesses of the Awakening. And how can there be a continuing revival in the midst of separatist wrangling and contentiousness that arose in most of the churches supporting the revival and that issued in major or minor church splits?

CHAPTER X

RISE OF NEW DENOMINATIONS: THE BAPTISTS

When the Great Awakening came to Connecticut the Baptists had hardly arrived. It may be confidently stated that there were only three congregations in the colony in 1740, some Baptist historians to the contrary. But these had multiplied to twenty-eight churches in 1784[1] and sixty churches with forty ministers and about 4,000 members by 1800.[2] This great increase is to a large degree an indirect result of the Great Awakening. A complete story of the rise of the Baptists in Connecticut would fill a book; at least a partial telling is germane to the present study.

The story began in 1704 in Groton, a few miles west of the Rhode Island border. A few Baptists in the town made petition to the General Court for liberty to hold meetings and establish a church there. No notice seems to have been taken of their request; so they took silence for assent and proceeded to carry out their purpose. The following year they organized and invited Rev. Valentine Wightman from Rhode Island to become their pastor. At that time the congregation numbered less than twenty.

[1] J. Torrey Smith, Centenary Discourse . . . of the First Baptist Church in Woodstock, Connecticut (Danielsonville, Conn.: Windham Co. Transcript Office, 1867), p. 4.

[2] John L. Denison, Some Items of Baptist History in Connecticut (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1900), p. 15. At the same time Baptist growth elsewhere in New England was as great or greater. In Massachusetts the denomination's churches increased from five before the Awakening to 136 by 1800; in Rhode Island from eleven to forty; in Vermont and New Hampshire from zero to over forty each; Edwin S. Gaustad, The Great Awakening in New England (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1965; orig. pub., 1957), pp. 122-23.

Wightman served them for forty-two years and was succeeded by his son, who ministered in the town for another forty years.[3]

Valentine Wightman was instrumental in organizing a second Baptist church--in Waterford, which until 1801 was a part of New London. This group was gathered about 1710, organized in 1726 and called Stephen Gorton as their pastor. Gorton was ordained by Elder Wightman. During the Great Awakening Gorton became involved in some moral difficulty which tore the church apart. But about 1748 members of this congregation regrouped around William Peckham and Daniel Green.[4]

In 1731, when Gorton still enjoyed an untarnished reputation, several people in Wallingford, thirteen miles north of New Haven, united with his church. By 1739 this group had grown sufficiently to have their own pastor. About ten families were represented in this congregation at the time; Timothy Waters was called to be their minister. Later John Merriman served them. But before Merriman was called the church was for a time without a pastor. Friendship between the New Light Congregationalists and the Baptists had led Pastor Joseph Bellamy of Woodbury (now Bethlehem) and Philemon Robbins of Branford to serve as pulpit supply in the Wallingford church. It will be remembered that for such an "insubordinate" act (in January, 1742) Robbins had been tried by the Consociation of New Haven County and deposed from the ministry. It is a real question whether Robbins sacrifice was worth it all because the Wallingford church ceased to

[3] Philip Evans, History of the Connecticut Baptist State Convention (Hartford: Smith-Linsley Co., 1909), p. 6.

[4] D. Hamilton Hurd, History of New London County, Connecticut (Philadelphia: J. W. Lewis and Co., 1882), p. 751.

exist about 1750.[5]

So, then, there were three Baptist churches in Connecticut when Whitefield came through in 1740: Groton, Waterford (New London), and Wallingford. Denison and others have claimed that a fourth church was organized at Farmington (now Southington) in 1738;[6] but Heman R. Timlow, the town's historian says there is evidence that not a single landholder in the town was outside the standing order in 1740 and the same is true until 1750, and he contests Baptist claims to the contrary. Baptists do not seem to have held regular services at Southington until about 1780.[7]

These Baptist churches were not, however, enthusiastic about supporting the Great Awakening. The Baptist churches of New England were in general Arminian and Six-Principle churches (based on the six principles of Hebrews 6:1-2) and could not be expected to cooperate in a movement that was essentially Calvinistic. But the revival so thoroughly shook the colony that it was virtually impossible for the Baptist churches to avoid benefiting somewhat. Isaac Backus wrote that:

> A measure of it /the blessing of the Great Awakening/ was granted to the Baptists in Boston, Leicester, Brimfield, Newport, Groton and Wallingford; but as the work was begun and carried on almost wholly by Pedo-baptists, from which denomination their fathers had suffered much, most of the Baptists were prejudiced against the work, and against the Calvinian doctrine by which it was promoted.[8]

[5] Charles H. S. Davis, History of Wallingford, Connecticut (Meriden, Conn.: Published by the Author, 1870), pp. 269, 275.

[6] Denison, p. 8.

[7] Heman R. Timlow, Ecclesiastical and Other Sketches of Southington, Connecticut (Hartford: Case, Lockwood & Brainard Co., 1875), pp. 287, 291.

[8] Isaac Backus, A History of New England (Newton, Mass.: Backus Historical Society, 1871), II, 41.

While the Groton church enjoyed some growth, the Wallingford church was not benefited enough to keep it from dying in less than a decade, as has been noted. And the Waterford Baptists were too upset over their pastor to enjoy any spiritual blessing. If the Baptists did not increase rapidly during the Awakening, a rapid build-up would be required in subsequent decades in order for the denomination to achieve the proportions it enjoyed by the end of the century. The story of Baptist growth is carried down through a couple of decades here to give some idea of what happened to the movement as a result of the Awakening.

New Churches

Hardly had the great surge of revival dissipated than new Baptist churches began to form. Perhaps the first of these was in North Stonington. Here is well illustrated the fact that when converts of the Great Awakening started to question the Half-Way Covenant and to insist upon regeneration as a condition for church membership and the Lord's Supper, many of them concluded that to be consistent conversion should also precede the other sacrament of the church, i. e., baptism. Furthermore, many of them were worried that continuation of infant baptism might again fill the churches with unconverted persons. Says Goen:

> In professing to return to the pure church ideal, the Separates almost inevitably came to the conclusion that if churches were to be composed only of the regenerate, the rite of admission should be restricted to confessed believers. The baptism of infants, whether of believing parents or not, appeared to deny the strict standard of church membership and to undo the work of reformation in one generation. If this practice were not repudiated, the unregenerate were not explicitly excluded from the church and the basic presuppositions of a worldly religious establishment were still retained. The gravitation of many Separates to the practice of

> believer's baptism, therefore, was a logical termination of their quest for the true church in all its purity.[9]

The fears of these separatists were well grounded because in about a generation most of the Congregational Separates had accommodated themselves to conditions that had produced the Half-Way Covenant in the first place, and the life of the churches had probably sunk to the level existing on the eve of the Great Awakening.

Moreover, New Lights saw in baptism by immersion a beautiful witness to a spiritual experience already enjoyed. This experience as detailed in Romans 6:3-11 involved death (to the old self and the old life), burial and resurrection of the believer with Christ unto newness of life. A few came to the Baptist position shortly after the Awakening and separated from the Congregational churches to form Baptist churches. Others passed through an intermediate stage of going off into the Separate Congregational fold first and then joining Baptist churches. At North Stonington both stages are illustrated: a Baptist church was formed from the Congregational church in 1743 and three years later a Separate Congregational church was gathered, from which a number of members later moved to the Baptist church in town.

Valentine Wightman of nearby Groton had been instrumental in the formation of this Baptist church in North Stonington, which called as its pastor Wait Palmer, one of its members. The records of this church are lost from its organization down to 1762, when Palmer was dismissed after nearly twenty years of service. The main charge was demanding a stated salary. Palmer was followed by an Eleazer Brown. By 1784 the church

[9] C. C. Goen, Revivalism and Separatism in New England, 1740-1800 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), pp. 208-209.

membership had grown to 97; in 1792 a revival brought in 52 members, and the total rose to 154.[10] As noted in Chapter VIII, the Baptists of North Stonington grew steadily at the expense of the Congregational church until the former must have been at least four times as numerous as the latter by the dawn of the nineteenth century, when there were two Baptist churches in town.

The year 1743 also saw the organization of a Baptist church at Ashford in the north of Windham County. James Hale, pastor of the Congregational church there was ill during the Great Awakening and was not able to hold a firm grip on things. He died in November, 1742; and the new pastor, John Bass, was not installed until September, 1743. Solomon Paine and other New Light leaders had preached in the community and many of their hearers embraced separatist or New Light principles. The separatists divided on baptism and the orthodox divided into rigid and liberal Calvinist camps; so there were four distinct factions in the town. During the commotion many turned Baptist and in the summer of 1743 organized a church. Thomas Denison of New London was ordained their pastor but soon renounced his Baptist principles. The church became discouraged and fell to pieces, but Baptist seeds had been planted and the church was reformed in 1774.[11]

Denison says that a Baptist church was organized in Saybrook in 1744.[12] Apparently the members were New Light separatists who became Baptists

[10] Hurd, p. 736.

[11] Richard M. Bayles (ed.), History of Windham County (New York: W. W. Preston and Co., 1889), pp. 1010-1019.

[12] Denison, p. 13.

immediately upon separation from the standing church. Presumably it was fourteen members of this church who were arrested in 1744 for "holding a meeting contrary to law on God's holy Sabbath day" and fined and driven twenty-five miles to New London where they were thrown into prison. Remaining in confinement for weeks, they were dependent on New London Baptists for food and other necessities.[13] Elder Peckham of Wallingford ministered in Saybrook occasionally.[14] Joshua Morse of the Montville church supplied their pulpit for a couple of decades.[15] In 1773 the group was numerous enough to construct their own church building and three years later called Rev. Eliphalet Lester of Waterford to be their pastor.[16]

In an earlier section on the separate churches, an account of what happened in Montville (North New London) has been given. Suffice it to say here that a separate church was gathered in the town in 1747 and pastored until 1750 by Dyer Hyde. When Joshua Morse became pastor in 1750 the congregation went over to the Baptists. A similar situation arose in East Lyme (Lyme second parish). As a result of the preaching of Valentine Wightman, Baptist sentiments became strong in the town; so

[13] George L. Clark, A History of Connecticut (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1914), p. 273.

[14] Hurd, p. 751.

[15] Goen, p. 307. Joshua's youngest son, Asahel, was author of the clause on religious liberty in the Bill of Rights of the Connecticut constitution of 1818, which disestablished the Congregational church and gave complete religious liberty to the state; M. Louise Greene, The Development of Religious Liberty in Connecticut (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1905), p. 487.

[16] Historical Sketch of the Baptist Churches of Saybrook, Connecticut (Hartford: Case, Lockwood and Brainard, 1870), p. 7.

when the separatist church was formed there in 1749, many of its members were predisposed to the Baptist position. Ebenezer Mack, the pastor, took his congregation en bloc into the Baptist fold in 1752. At that time sixty-eight are recorded as members; they built a meeting house in 1755. In 1767 the membership roll had increased to 150.[17]

According to Miss Larned, in the more northerly part of Windham County there were no Congregational separatist churches. Instead, those who pulled out of the standing order formed Baptist churches. The first and strongest of these was gathered in Thompson, where many had been converted during the revival. After a fervent young Baptist itinerant, Jeremiah Barstow of Sturbridge, Massachusetts, preached in the area in 1748, the Baptist movement grew rapidly. One gets something of the flavor of conditions in rural Connecticut at that time from the account of the founding of the Thompson church as related by Miss Larned. By changing names and details, one could make this story fit several church situations in Connecticut during the 1740s.

> At the close of the sermon one Sunday afternoon, he /Barstow/ arose from his seat, and, addressing the minister, asked liberty to tell his experience. This request was promptly denied by Mr. Cabot, and the presumptuous intruder 'turned out of the meeting house,' whereupon he persisted in exhorting the people before the doors till arrested by proper officers for this breach of law and decorum, was carried next morning to jail, and endured a month's imprisonment. This violent treatment awakened the sympathies of Wightman Jacobs and others, and called public attention to the principles for which Barstow had suffered. Other Baptist exhorters (probably from Leicester or Sturbridge), extended their labors to this promising field. Meetings were held, principles discussed, and soon a considerable number declared themselves Baptists, withdrew from the stated religious worship, held meetings by themselves, and probably united with the Baptist church of Leicester, as they refused to pay rates for the

[17] Historical Sketch of New London Baptist Association (Boston: J. Howe, 1851), pp. 40, 67.

> support of Mr. Cabot. A spirited contest with the society officers followed, in which the Baptists defenced their rights with much gallantry. When arrested for holding unlawful meetings, they retaliated by bringing actions against the civil authority for rioting, and when "strained upon for rates," claimed the benefit of the Toleration Act, and appealed for relief to the County Court. Their plea was allowed, and exemption granted.[18]

Several Baptists then formally organized as a Six Principle Baptist church in 1750. Wightman Jacobs of their number was chosen pastor by the church and ordained. The congregation grew rapidly so that other churches were formed from it in adjacent towns. These united in an association of eight churches. The situation here differed from that obtaining elsewhere, however, because some of these Baptists wished to return to the Abrahamic Covenant and infant baptism and left the Baptist churches to form Congregational Separate churches.[19]

The next Baptist church was organized on the other side of the colony in Stratfield (ancient Bridgeport). Here, the Rev. Samuel Cooke, a friend of the revival, had pastored the standing church during the Awakening. Some of his congregation were not pro-revival and withdrew to form an Episcopal church. Cooke's successor, Lyman Hall, was opposed to the New Lights; so a factional disturbance arose in the church. In 1751 Hall was dismissed and in the midst of the confusion of subsequent weeks six men and four women met at the home of Captain John Sherwood during October to form a separate society. After the service (conducted by Joshua Morse of the Montville church) six were baptized, including Captain Sherwood. So the church formed was a Baptist church from the start; Sherwood was called

[18] Ellen D. Larned, History of Windham County, Connecticut (Worcester, Mass.: Published by the Author, 1874-80), I, 464-65.

[19] Larned, I, 465.

to be its pastor and was ordained. These congregationalists moved directly to the Baptist position without going through the Separate Congregational stage.[20]

The Baptist movement in Enfield is not so well known. About 1750 a church of that denomination formed in the northeast part of town and had for its pastor Joseph Meacham. Presumably the congregation had once been members of the standing church, but whether they came to Baptist views directly or by way of the separatist route is not known. When Meacham became a convert to Shakerism in 1781, several members of his church went with him and the Baptist church became extinct.[21] It must have regrouped soon, however, because Pastor George Atwell of the Enfield Baptists was employed to preach part time to the separate church there in 1795, with the result that the Baptists and separatists subsequently united.[22]

In 1765 second Baptist churches were founded in Groton and North Stonington. In order to understand the occasion for a second church in Groton, it is necessary to review the history of the first church. When Valentine Wightman died in 1747, Daniel Fisk of Rhode Island was called to be the second pastor. Factions with which he was unable to cope seem to have arisen in the church. Just as the separate churches could not quite agree on whether to be Congregational or Baptist, the Baptist

[20] George C. Waldo, Jr. (ed.), History of Bridgeport and Vicinity (New York: S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1917), I, 301; D. Hamilton Hurd, History of Fairfield County, Connecticut (Philadelphia: J. W. Lewis & Co., 1881), p. 77.

[21] J. Hammond Trumbull (ed.), The Memorial History of Hartford County, Connecticut (Boston: Edward L. Osgood, 1886), II, 153.

[22] Francis O. Allen (ed.), The History of Enfield, Connecticut Lancaster, Pa.: The Wickersham Printing Co., 1900), II, 1529.

congregations could not quite agree on whether to be strict communion or mixed communion Baptists. Most of Fisk's congregation (who had come out of the Congregational church) were sympathetic with the separatists and thus in favor of open communion. A split in the Baptist church took place and the church reorganized about 1754. Fisk clung to a remnant of the old congregation and went out of sight. Timothy Wightman, son of Valentine, became leader of the majority element. The mixed communion Baptists of Wightman's congregation allowed the separatists all the privileges of Baptists until 1765, when they changed their position and required baptism by immersion for membership. In the same year a second Baptist church arose which became mixed communion and is sometimes known as the Fort Hill Baptist church. At this time a revival broke out among the Baptists and separatists in Groton and greatly increased their numbers. In 1797 the Fort Hill church returned to the strict communion basis from which it had departed.[23] By the end of the century the Baptist position had hardened, and an increasingly large percentage of new members came as raw converts from the community rather than the separatist movement. Circumstances calling for a second Baptist church in North Stonington are not known. Simeon Brown was called as pastor, and he gathered around himself a church of respectable numbers.[24]

Catalyst for the rise of a Baptist church at Woodstock in northern Windham County was Noah Alden, a Baptist from Massachusetts who preached

[23] Hurd, New London, pp. 439-40.

[24] Hurd, New London, p. 736.

in Woodstock in 1763.[25] His first convert was Biel Ledoyt, a wild young man and ringleader of the more troublesome youth of the community. After his conversion, Ledoyt's former companions tried to drag him back into the old way, but he led four of them to a conversion experience. Isaac Backus said that those who heard Biel Ledoyt "stood like men amazed . . . . The groves rang with the bitter out-cries of the distressed youth."[26] A revival broke out in the town (under the preaching of Ledoyt), in which especially the young people were changed. Some forty were converted. They gave up their wild parties and dances and turned to reading the Bible and good books and to attendance at religious meetings two or three times a week. Emotional scenes of the forties were repeated. The youth now found the church to be cold and formal and became critical of it, and the church for its part looked with suspicion on irregular and enthusiastic religious demonstrations. To deal with the questions raised an assembly of divines was called for counsel. That august body, with a marvelous lack of wisdom fell to railing about false spirits, Satan transforming himself into an angel of light, and insinuating that the powerful work experienced in the community was a delusion and that deceivers would come in the last days.[27] Their approach was hardly the way to quell a disturbance.

The young converts now turned to the church that would give them the comfort and liberty they desired, the Baptist church. In February, 1766,

[25] But this was not the beginning of Baptist interest in the town. Efforts had been made there during the years 1749-52 to organize a Baptist church and ordain a pastor, but they had come to naught; see Larned, I, 466-68.

[26] Backus, II, 522.

[27] Smith, p. 5; Bayles, p. 893.

a congregation of sixteen members was formed and increased rapidly in numbers. In 1767 Rev. Ezra Horton preached to them and on May 26, 1768, Biel Ledoyt was ordained as its pastor. The church was early connected with the Warren Association of Rhode Island and for twenty years was very successful. Later it experienced serious difficulties and the large congregation was scattered, but after a few years the church was brought back to a prosperous condition by Robert Stanton. In 1773 the congregation had forty-eight members and in 1781 had grown to 140.[28] The Woodstock Baptist Church is a good example of a Baptist church that arose almost entirely from an evangelistic effort in a community by an itinerant Baptist; few members had had anything to do with the Great Awakening or came out of the standing order.

The Baptist church in Suffield came into existence primarily through the efforts of Joseph Hastings. Pastor of the Separate Congregational Church in town, Hastings had declared for Baptist principles and carried the majority of his congregation with him, leaving the separatists to regroup. The Baptist church organized in 1769 with Hastings as its first minister. His son John succeeded him and was ordained in 1775 and served with marked success. He is said to have baptized about 1,100 during his ministry; nine churches were formed by colonies from his church.[29] The Baptist church in Suffield was greatly strengthened in John Hastings' day by a steady stream of members coming from the separate church in town.

[28] Clarence W. Bowen, The History of Woodstock, Connecticut (Norwood, Mass.: Plimpton Press, 1926), p. 305.

[29] Trumbull, II, 393.

It is not necessary to carry the story of Baptist development in Connecticut further to demonstrate the nature of its growth. Many additional churches were formed later in the century, one of them in Norwich fifth parish, as a result of a separate church becoming Baptist en bloc.[30] As separate churches died or as they returned to the standing order, numerous separatists joined Baptist ranks. The survey provided above has been sufficient to show the relationship of the Great Awakening to Baptist growth. At least twelve Baptist churches are known to have been formed in Connecticut between 1740 and 1770, in addition to the group that Miss Larned refers to in north Windham County. Of these, the north Windham churches and those in North Stonington (first church), Ashford, Saybrook, and Stratfield were formed directly out of the established churches, presumably by individuals quickened during the Awakening and unhappy with the churches they had joined. In Montville and East Lyme separate churches became Baptist en bloc. The situation was virtually the same in Enfield where the remnant of the separate church joined the Baptists late in the century and in Suffield where a split from the separate church became Baptist en bloc. The first church of North Groton arose as a result of leakage from both the separate and standing churches, and the second Baptist church there probably consisted of those who had once been separatists. In addition, in every instance where such churches existed, there was movement of separatists from their churches to Baptist congregations. Only one of these more than a dozen churches described

[30] Frances M. Caulkins, History of Norwich, Connecticut (Hartford: Friends of the Author, 1874), p. 598.

above (i. e., Woodstock) came into existence as a result of a revival in the town long after the Awakening. Thus it is abundantly clear that impetus to Baptist growth is inextricably linked to the Great Awakening, to separatism and to issues raised by that movement.

But the growth of the Baptist church in Connecticut during the latter half of the century is only part of the story. Goen has constructed an excellent account of the rise of Baptist churches on the frontiers of the northeast. Many of the leaders and members of these congregations came from Connecticut separate churches. Bliss Willoughby, former pastor of the Newent Separate Church, turned up as a leader of the first Baptist church in Vermont, at Shaftsbury.[31] In 1768 Ebenezer Mack of East Lyme moved to Marlow, New Hampshire, with a large part of his separate Baptist congregation.[32] The Baptist church at Sandisfield, Massachusetts, was gathered by Joshua Morse from New London, Connecticut.[33] The Pittsfield Massachusetts, Baptist church was transplanted from Stonington, Connecticut by Valentine Rathbun in 1772.[34] Whitesborough, New York, in the Mohawk Valley was founded by a colony from Middletown, Connecticut. To these people Stephen Parsons of Middletown brought Baptist beliefs and later was called to be pastor of the Baptist church there. The town became a center of Baptist influence in western New York.[35] While the

[31] Goen, p. 251.

[32] Goen, p. 252.

[33] Goen, p. 254.

[34] Goen, p. 254.

[35] Goen, p. 257.

Great Awakening contributed greatly to the Baptist cause in Connecticut and on the frontier, it also contributed to the rise of the Baptists in more settled areas of New England.

Even the briefest statement about Connecticut Baptists would not be considered complete without reference to Isaac Backus (1724-1806), historian and fighter for religious liberty and the outstanding American Baptist of his generation. Through the preaching of Benjamin Pomeroy, Eleazar Wheelock, James Davenport and others, the Awakening came to Norwich, home town of Isaac Backus. He was converted in 1741 and joined the established church the following year. Dissatisfied with the Half-Way Covenant and other practices in the Norwich church, Backus left Benjamin Lord's congregation in 1745 to establish a separate church in Norwich known as the Bean Hill Church. The following year Backus felt the call to preach and spent fourteen months in itinerant evangelism in eastern Connecticut, Rhode Island and Massachusetts, amazingly escaping arrest. In 1748 he felt led to accept the pastorate of the Titicut Separate church near Middleborough, Massachusetts, and remained in the town for fifty-eight years.[36] After a struggle of some two years, Backus accepted the Baptist position and was immersed on August 22, 1751. His congregation was as unsettled on questions of baptism as he, and the church tried a mixed-communion plan for five years. In 1756 he declared for the strict communion Baptist position and formed the first Baptist church in that part of Massachusetts.

[36] Frederic Denison, Notes on the Baptists and their Principles in Norwich, Connecticut (Norwich: Manning, 1857), pp. 44-5.

Backus traveled frequently on preaching missions but was even more influential through his writing, producing thirty-seven pamphlets in addition to his History of New England. Much of what he wrote was a polemic against infant baptism; but it also enlisted support for the cause of religious liberty. His efforts in this cause were persistent and fill a whole chapter of Massachusetts history. In the colony and state he won a slight softening of laws against dissenters but not the full religious liberty for which he so heartily longed. His efforts contributed much, however, in terms of numerical support and philosophical defense for the position. Although he drew heavily on John Locke, especially his Letter on Toleration, the ecclesiastical polity of the Baptists and the sufferings they endured at the hands of the established order in New England did not necessitate Backus' dependence on an English philosopher to formulate his case.[37]

That a rapprochement of Congregational separatists with Baptists occurred in Connecticut is a fact of history. It involved (1) the help of Baptists in ordaining separate clergy and (2) the establishment of a number of mixed communion separate or Baptist churches. This cooperation of the two groups issued in large numbers of separatists moving over into the Baptist camp, both on the clergy and lay levels. Reasons for this tendency of separatists to become Baptists have been explored earlier. Suffice it to say here that the two groups had a great deal in common, the major difference being over the question of the mode and subjects for baptism. There was a very important appeal of the Baptists that helped

[37] For a review of the life and ministry of Backus, see Goen, pp. 215-24.

separatists to jump this hurdle. Without a line of institutional authority, the separatists were driven to rely solely on the Bible as a justification for their faith and practice. They became imbued with a desire to return to primitive Christianity. Adult baptism and baptism by immersion, though debatable, were associated in the minds of many with a return to primitive Christianity. Joining the Baptists imparted to the separatists a sense of biblical authority stemming directly from the early Christian church. Moreover, the long experience of the Baptists in Rhode Island proved that the complete congregational autonomy the separatists advocated was compatible with the existence of an orderly civil government. Baptists could not be charged with destroying government or society when Rhode Island stood as a witness to the contrary. Some in Connecticut, orientated as they were to a state-church organization, had attacked the separatist movement as destructive of social order. Naturally the separatists were attracted to a group that demonstrated their approach was not so inclined.

Changes Within the Baptist Church

The tremendous influx of separatists into Baptist ranks irrevocably changed New England Baptists, including these of Connecticut, of course. It has already been noted that the Calvinistic separatists brought about a theological shift in the Baptist denomination away from the old prevailingly Arminian position. Comments Goen:

> The Separates wrought a doctrinal revolution among the Baptists of New England, overwhelming by sheer force of numbers and unflagging zeal the older General Baptists. The future clearly belonged to

> the Calvinistic Baptists, largely because of the influence of the rapidly multiplying Separates who soon overran the whole region.[38]

The tremendous increase in numbers of Baptists led to the demand for a training school for the denomination and Rhode Island college was the result. Hames Manning was the leading light in launching the new institution. Converted under the preaching of Gilbert Tennent in 1748 and a graduate of the College of New Jersey in the class of 1762, he was instrumental in obtaining the charter of 1764 and was the school's president from 1765 to 1791. Isaac Backus, a Connecticut son, served faithfully on the board of trustees of the new institution for thirty-four years.

The continuing influence of the "Separate Baptists" within the Baptist denomination is seen in at least four areas. First, they bequeathed a legacy of concern for religious liberty. Since the separatists could not qualify under the toleration acts of Massachusetts and Connecticut as the Baptists and Anglicans could, they fought hard for disestablishment of the Congregational church. Baptists with this heritage were in the vanguard of the fight for religious liberty until it was achieved everywhere in New England. Second, the separatists imparted to the Baptists an evangelistic zeal. Comments Goen:

> But the revivalistic tradition, and the evangelistic zeal that keeps it alive, came to prevail among Baptists chiefly through the direct influence of the Separates. From the time of Isaac Backus until now, no history of Baptists in America could be written without giving a large place to the part played by revivals in the growth and spread of the denomination. This is true of the town as well as of the frontier, and there are few communities which have not known with some regularity the Baptist revival.[39]

[38] Goen, p. 275.

[39] Goen, p. 282.

Third, the Separate Baptists infused the New England Baptist movement with an evangelical Calvinism. While they held strongly the doctrine of sovereign grace, their emphasis on evangelism led them to move away from the stultifying effects of a rigid predestinarianism. Their Calvinism was not so extreme as that of the Baptists of the Middle Colonies. Goen observes, "in practice the urgency with which Baptist evangelists pressed for immediate commitment to Christ, pleading for an inward experience of heartfelt religion rather than a clear understanding of some doctrinal system, greatly modified their original Calvinism."[40] Last, the separatists had developed a view of the church which exalts local independency. It is true that early English Congregationalism had magnified this feature, but it had been somewhat lost in New England, especially in Connecticut with its Saybrook Platform. To the Strict Congregationalist the church was

> but a microcosm of Christ's entire spiritual kingdom. As such it is entirely self-contained and self-sufficient, having full freedom to order its own affairs under no other authority than the Lordship of Christ, and under no necessary obligation to any other ecclesiastical body. This is a radical individualism which makes even the church itself of secondary importance. The fundamental relationship is between Christ and the individual, and since salvation is prior to church membership, the church is important only as a fact after salvation.[41]

So the Great Awakening irrevocably changed the Baptist movement in New England from a small almost stagnant denomination to one of respectable proportions with an unbounding zeal to win men to Christ. And this new

[40] Goen, p. 285.

[41] Goen, p. 289.

militancy was characterized by an emphasis on the sacredness of the power of the local congregation, a concern for religious liberty and a conviction that they were individually elect of God. A concluding word by Goen is instructive: "By way of summing up, it may be said that they /the separatists/ bequeathed to Baptists the revivalistic tradition, in which the prophetic individualism of the early Puritans was fully (and perhaps permanently) institutionalized."[42] With the conviction that they had established congregations very close to the New Testament ideal, the Baptists went forward, seeking to fulfill the Great Commission to the Church.

[42] Goen, p. 294.

CHAPTER XI

RISE OF NEW DENOMINATIONS: THE ANGLICAN CHURCH

While the rise of Strict Congregational and Baptist churches rent the fabric of official establishment in eastern Connecticut, the rapid growth of Anglican congregations in western Connecticut tore the fabric of establishment there. Although neither group was confined to one part of the colony, there was a concentration of each. As Baptists and separatists drew support from Rhode Island, so Anglicans received encouragement from New York. Separatists argued that the Congregational church of Connecticut was not the true church because it did not tally with Scriptural injunctions concerning what a church should be and because many of her ministers were unconverted. Congregationalists turned Anglican argued that the Congregational church was not the true church but only a dissenter sect that had split from the true church, i. e., the Anglican. Moreover, as conservatives they were horrified at the excesses of the Awakening and were attracted to a church with a decorum that avoided such extremes. So both groups pulled out of the Connecticut establishment and thus greatly weakened its power over the religious and political life of the colony.

Though it is a hard assertion to prove fully, the contention is commonly made that the Anglican church in Connecticut obtained its great impetus for growth during the eighteenth century from the confusion and excesses of the Great Awakening. It is possible to quote testimonials from churches and individuals to the effect that they became Anglican because of these disorders. Churchmen of the time of the revival, and

town and church historians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are unanimous in their conclusion that this was so. A few quotations will help to underscore the truth of this claim. Additional quotations appear in the history of the churches below. The Rev. John Beach, who served Anglicans of Newtown and Redding during the Awakening said of its disorders:

> My people are not at all shaken, but rather confirmed, in their principles by the spirit of enthusiasm that rages among the Independents roundabout us; and many of the Dissenters, observing how steadfast our people are, . . . while these of their own denomination are easily carried away with every kind of doctrine, have conceived a much better opinion of our Church than they formerly had, and a considerable number in this colony have lately conformed, and several churches are now building where they have no minister.[1]

Another Anglican minister, "/Henry/ Caner early wrote, that while the religious enthusiasm had made no progress at Fairfield, it had spread at Norwalk, Stamford, Ridgefield, and other places, and the effects of it had been the means of 'reconciling many sober, considerate people to the communion of the Church.'"[2] The great Connecticut Anglican leader, Dr. Samuel Johnson, reported that the Awakening "occasioned endless divisions and separations, so that many could find no rest to the sole of their feet till they retired into the Church, as their only ark of safety." Then he concluded, "Revivals proved the greatest means of increase and enlargement of the Episcopal Church."[3]

[1] D. Hamilton Hurd, History of Fairfield County, Connecticut (Philadelphia: J. W. Lewis & Co., 1881), p. 604.

[2] E. Edwards Beardsley, The History of the Episcopal Church in Connecticut (4th ed; Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1883), I, 129-30.

[3] Samuel Johnson, Works of Samuel Johnson (Oxford: Talboys & Wheeler, 1825), I, 28.

Lucy S. Curtiss, historian of the Bridgeport Congregational Church, observed: ". . . the excesses of the revivals and the turmoil thereby engendered within the Congregational fold caused some of the more conservative members to look with favor upon a church that had remained undisturbed by the preachers of reform."[4] The historian of Derby, Connecticut, asserted that after the revival excitements of 1740 and 1741 the establishment of the Anglican Church became an easy matter and took some of the old substantial supporters of the Congregational Church into it.[5] In conclusion, a word from E. Edwards Beardsley, a respected historian of Connecticut Anglicanism, is in order:

> The Church was a gainer in the days of religious excitement by the steady presentation of the truth and the calm pursuance of her Scriptural course, in avoiding on the one hand the extreme of coldness and indifference, and on the other the heats of fanaticism and uncharitableness.[6]
>
> In the midst of such religious delerium, confusion, and peril, ministrations of the Church of England were continued with unabated zeal and steadfastness, and many repaired with gratitude to her communion, as to the ark which could alone carry them in safety over the raging floods.[7]

As was true with the Baptists, it seems that the only way to demonstrate the effect of the Great Awakening on Anglican development in Connecticut is to summarize the history of the denomination from its inception. The first preaching in Connecticut by Anglican ministers

[4] Lucy S. Curtiss, Two Hundred Fifty Years: The Story of the United Congregational Church of Bridgeport (Bridgeport, Conn., 1945), p. 33.

[5] Samuel Orcutt and Ambrose Beardsley, The History of the Old Town of Derby, Connecticut (Springfield, Mass.: Springfield Printing Co., 1880), p. 137.

[6] Beardsley, I, 105.

[7] Beardsley, I, 126.

occurred on September 13, 1702, when Rev. John Talbot and Rev. George Keith, missionaries with the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel preached in New London in the Congregational church.[8] But this ministry did not issue in the establishment of a church. Rather, the first congregation was gathered in Stratford and as a result of immigration of Anglicans from England. Nelson observes: ". . . in the homogeneous, agrarian, Congregational community of Connecticut Anglicanism appeared, not through a breakdown in the existing system or through internal dissension, but rather by the immigration of people atypical in occupation and social status."[9] In a similar vein Trumbull says, "The churchmen at first, in that town, consisted of about fifteen families, among whom were a few husbandmen, but much the greatest number were tradesmen, who had been born in England, and came and settled there."[10] It is significant to note that Trumbull found this group not to be farmers of native Connecticut stock and presumably never a part of the Congregational establishment.

The real beginnings of Anglican organization in Connecticut came about as a result of agitation by Colonel Caleb Heathcote of Westchester County, New York, an official highly placed in the government of that colony. Heathcote urged the S. P. G. to minister to the Stratford group and to encourage creation of a congregation. Heathcote and Rev. George

[8] James Shepard, History of Saint Mark's Church, New Britain, Connecticut (Published by the Author, 1907), p. 41.

[9] See the unpublished dissertation (Northwestern, 1962) by John K. Nelson, "Anglican Missions in America 1701-1725," p. 520.

[10] Benjamin Trumbull, A Complete History of Connecticut (New Haven: Maltby, Goldsmith & Co., 1818), I, 504.

Muirson of the S. P. G. visited the coastal towns of Fairfield County in 1706 and Muirson held a meeting at Stratford. One of the Stratford justices warned people not to hear Muirson and threatened them with imprisonment and a fine of five pounds if they did so. In April, 1707, this congregation arranged the election of churchwardens and vestrymen, decided to build a church and petitioned the S. P. G. to transfer Muirson to Stratford as resident minister. On June 11, 1708, the transfer was effected.[11] Unfortunately, Muirson died in a few months, leaving the group discouraged; and the building project collapsed. In 1708 the Connecticut Assembly was forced to pass a toleration act; refusal to permit Anglicans to form a church would put the whole Connecticut political system in jeopardy. This act of toleration did not release Anglicans from financial support of the Congregational Church, however.[12] In 1709 a number of Anglicans refused to pay ecclesiastical rates and some were jailed; thus they were forced to comply. The issue was not revived until the buildup of Anglicanism after 1722. Again Congregationalism was forced to compromise. In 1727 the Assembly determined that in any parish where a Church of England minister was permanently settled those attending his services could designate their taxes to him.[13] Two years later these privileges were extended to Quakers and Baptists. In passing, it is

[11] Nelson, pp. 524-26; Charles C. Tiffany, A History of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America (New York: The Christian Literature Co., 1895), p. 124.

[12] Charles J. Hoadly (ed.), The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut (Hartford: Case, Lockwood & Brainard, 1870), V, 50.

[13] Paul W. Coons, Achievement of Religious Liberty in Connecticut (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1936), p. 14.

important to note that entrance of Anglicanism early in the century had had something to do with the inauguration of the Saybrook Platform, which was an effort to create a more Presbyterian-like polity that hopefully would prevent defection from the established church.

It is beyond the purview of this chapter to tell in any detail the history of specific Anglican churches, but a brief reference to them will prove useful. The Stratford church obtained a minister in 1712, but he was incompetent and was dismissed the following year. The next minister, George Pigot from Rhode Island, is important because of his visits to Fairfield, Ripton and Newton and the interest he stirred up in those places. His ministry is instructive, too, in terms of what could happen if the Congregational Church did not keep its house in order. When Pigot arrived in 1722, the Congregational church in town was at odds over the choice of a new pastor; within a month Pigot reported that 150 were attending his Sunday services.[14] When Pigot was transferred to Providence in 1723, Samuel Johnson took charge in Stratford.

The mention of Johnson introduces a whole new chapter in the history of Connecticut Anglicanism. On the day after commencement at Yale, on September 13, 1722, Rector Timothy Cutler and Daniel Browne, sole tutor at Yale, and several neighboring clergy met in the library with the trustees and a number of leading clergy. Cutler and Browne presented a document signed by themselves and five pastors: John Hart (East Guilford), Samuel Whittelsey (Wallingford), Jared Eliot (Killingsworth), Samuel

[14] Nelson, p. 538.

Johnson (West Haven), and James Wetmore (New Haven) concerning their doubts about the validity of Congregational ordination. Action was postponed until the meeting of the General Assembly in October. At that time Cutler and Browne were dismissed for embracing episcopacy; Samuel Johnson and Jared Eliot were relieved of their pastoral charges for the same reason. The other three ministers were permitted to continue their ministry on probation because they only had doubts about the Congregational way and had not decided for episcopacy.[15] As to why this defection had occurred, the explanation comes partly from the defectors themselves: the influence of Anglican books in the library. Defection occurred also because of the physical presence of the Anglican church for the first time in New England; Cutler had been a pastor in Stratford, where a growing Anglican church was located. But Nelson's conclusion is more perceptive:

> This restlessness, ultimately explicable only within the larger context of New England's social and intellectual development, would appear to indicate the growing awareness of a century-long isolation from European thought, the frustration of provincial minds grasping hold of the startling truths of the new physics and psychology of Newton and Locke, and the painful groping for means of relating themselves to an enlarging world-view.[16]

In other words, the Enlightenment was beginning to make an impact on Connecticut. That impact would become more evident on the lay level during the last half of the eighteenth century, but it was visible among the clergy at this time and would increase during successive decades. Books

[15] Franklin B. Dexter, Documentary History of Yale (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1916), pp. 190, 195, 232; Trumbull, II, 33; Beardsley, I, 36; "Papers Respecting the Episcopal Controversy in Connecticut, 1722," Massachusetts Historical Society Collections, Ser. 2, Vol. II (1846), 128-9.

[16] Nelson, p. 546.

in the Yale library exposed the rising generation of leaders to the Enlightenment, and those who went to England to take orders imbibed something of the movement there. Of course impetus was given to its acceptance by ideas flowing in from Boston, New York and elsewhere.

The Yale conversions sent an electric shock through the entire colony, rocking the establishment to its very foundations, raising questions about the nature of Anglicanism and stirring up interest in it, and bringing to the movement a new respectability and leadership. Samuel Johnson returned to Stratford after ordination in England and served for three decades there, so effectively that by 1764 a network of Anglican congregations extended from Stratford, necessitating the full-time energies of thirteen S. P. G. missionaries, each ministering to more than one congregation.[17] When Johnson arrived in 1723 there were thirty families in his congregation. In four years membership had increased to 250. He was called to the presidency of King's in 1754. The first Anglican church in Connecticut was opened for services at Stratford in 1724.

The 1720s and 1730s were decades when important foundations were laid for the Anglican church in Connecticut. Services were conducted at Fairfield late in 1722 and the congregation had organized and proceeded with construction of a church by 1725.[18] In the latter year St. James parish of New London was organized and a church building completed in

[17] Trumbull II, 537; see also Herbert and Carol Schneider (eds.), Samuel Johnson President of King's College; His Career and Writings (New York: Columbia University Press, 1929), 4 vols.

[18] Shepard, p. 49.

1734, with the help of gifts from Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island.[19] It is important to note that this church was the offspring of the early commercial importance and promise of the town. Of those whose names remain as active founders, most are known to have been Englishmen who were members of the Anglican church before their coming and were never Puritans.[20] Trinity Parish, Newtown, was founded in 1732 and the first church building completed two years later.[21] During the years 1732 and 1733 important defections occurred among the Congregational clergy. John Beach of Newtown (pastor there for seven years) sailed for England, was ordained and became a missionary in Newtown and Redding. Samuel Seabury (father of the future bishop of the same name) gave up his charge at Groton and sailed to England for holy orders, as did Ebenezer Punderson of North Groton (Ledyard). Both of the latter returned to Connecticut in the service of the Church of England.[22] A small church was gathered at Poquetannock (Groton) in 1734 by Punderson[23] and in the same year at Redding by Beach.[24]

[19] Frances M. Caulkins, History of New London, Connecticut (New London: H. D. Utley, 1895), p. 440.

[20] D. Hamilton Hurd, History of New London County, Connecticut (Philadelphia: J. W. Lewis & Co., 1882), p. 197.

[21] Lucy Jarvis, Sketches of Church Life in Colonial Connecticut (New Haven: Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor Co., 1902), p. 39.

[22] Contributions to the Ecclesiastical History of Connecticut (New Haven: William L. Kingsley, 1861), p. 266.

[23] Frances M. Caulkins, History of Norwich, Connecticut (Hartford: Friends of the Author, 1874), p. 451.

[24] Jarvis, p. 53.

The founding of St. Peter's Church in Hebron is a further illustration of how the lack of fence-mending among the Congregationalists permitted Anglicans to enter the pasture. A factional dispute of long standing resulted in deep divisions in the town. As part of this struggle the minister, John Bliss, was dismissed in 1734, accused of various immoralities by his enemies. His friends stuck by him and met at his house for religious services. Then Bliss was charged and tried for holding schismatic services. Though acquitted, he decided to declare for the Church of England and spearheaded organization of St. Peter's parish there in 1735.[25] Bliss continued as lay reader. St. Paul's parish at Norwalk and St. James Parish at Derby were both founded in 1737.[26] An event of the year 1738 is important for a knowledge of how extensive the Anglican movement had become in Connecticut by that time. A memorial for equal rights was addressed to the General Assembly by 636 Anglicans over sixteen years of age and apparently represents nearly all of the churchmen in the colony. Names are arranged as from Greenwich, Stamford, Groton, New London, Hebron, Stratford, Norwalk and Fairfield.[27] One more parish came into existence before the year of Whitefield's first tour through New England. St. Stephen's Church was organized at Ridgefield in 1739 and its first meeting house constructed the following year.[28]

Attention must now be turned to the coming of Whitefield and the

[25] Jarvis, pp. 54-56.

[26] Jarvis, pp. 59, 61.

[27] Shepard, p. 67.

[28] Jarvis, pp. 63-4.

subsequent rapid growth of Anglicanism in Connecticut. Five Anglican parishes were organized in the colony in 1740, at least one or two of them brought into existence by Whitefield's coming and the resultant excitement. The first of these was St. Peter's at Plymouth (formerly Northbury) and resulted in part from a controversy in the Congregational church over location of the meeting house. At Roxbury, Rev. John Beach of Newtown organized Christ Church, perhaps the first Anglican church in Litchfield County. This congregation did not build its sanctuary until 1763. Although St. Paul's at Woodbury was founded in 1740, it did not have a rector until 1771. St. Andrew's at Simsbury (now Bloomfield) was a very small fellowship, but it also included adjacent areas. The fifth parish established in 1740 was St. Paul's at Wallingford serving twenty-five families.[29]

The origin of the Plymouth church is the easiest of the five to document. There apparently a wedge was driven between segments of the church congregation, to some extent along class lines. This factionalism was heightened by the excitement attending the revival so that eleven out of the eighteen town proprietors declared for the Church of England. Later, when they wrote to the Honorable Society in 1744, this congregation gave Whitefield's activity as the real reason for their joining the Church of England:

> . . . Mr. Whitefield passing through the land, condemning all but his adherents; and his followers and imitators--by their insufferable enthusiastic whims and extemporaneous jargon--brought in such a

[29] Jarvis, pp. 65-79.

> flood of confusion amongst us, that . . . we fled to the Church of England for safety . . ."[30]

In the same letter the group further declared that they had all been brought up as Presbyterians (Congregationalists) but that they had been influenced to consider the validity of the Anglican position by reading some books given them by S. P. G. missionaries.

After 1740 there was no stopping the rapid advance of the Anglican church in Connecticut. The situation that developed at Stratford is instructive and indicative of factors contributing to this rapid growth. In the midst of the excitement of the Awakening a number of leading Congregational families moved over into the Anglican church.[31] The Congregational minister, Hezekiah Gold, denounced Samuel Johnson, rector of Christ's Church as a worker of all kinds of mischief and as an intruder. Johnson is reported to have replied to an inquiry concerning his congregation at this time, "Yes, it is increasing. I am a feeble instrument in the hands of God; but, thanks be to him! he has placed my left-handed brother Gold here, who makes six churchmen while I can make one."[32] Among other things, Gold complained that the Anglican church was providing cover for rebellious individuals in Congregational churches who went Anglican to avoid the humiliation of discipline.[33] But beyond local Congregational

[30] Beardsley, I, 132.

[31] Samuel Orcutt, A History of the Old Town of Stratford and the City of Bridgeport, Connecticut (New Haven: Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor Co., 1886), p. 349.

[32] Tiffany, p. 143.

[33] See the unpublished dissertation (Harvard, 1960) by Richard L. Bushman, "Government and Society in Connecticut, 1690-1760," p. 241.

attacks in many places, the excitement brought on by the revival pushed many conservatives into the Anglican fold. About 1742 Johnson wrote a friend in London concerning the popular enthusiasm, "It has occasioned such a growth of the Church in this town (as well as in many other places) that the church will not hold us, and we are obliged to rebuild or much enlarge."[34] The new Stratford church was opened for use in 1743.

By the time Johnson wrote this letter there were fourteen Anglican churches built in Connecticut, with seven resident clergymen and more than 2,000 adult communicants.[35] In the spring of the same year the clergy of the Church of England in Connecticut met at Fairfield and prepared a petition to the Bishop of London to appoint a commisary to be sent to America. The Rev. Dr. Johnson was proposed for the post. The request, signed by Henry Caner, Samuel Seabury, Ebenezer Punderson, Richard Caner and John Beach, was not granted.

Meanwhile, new Anglican congregations were crowding to be born and old ones were growing considerably. In 1742 St. John's parish in Stamford organized and made an appeal for a grant of land on which to build a church;[36] the structure was not completed until 1747. St. John's in New Milford also formed in 1742.[37] The Simsbury membership increased from twenty-seven in 1742 to forty-five in 1743.[38] St. Paul's in Norwalk was

[34] Beardsley, I, 133.

[35] Shepard, p. 75; Johnson, I, 106.

[36] Jarvis, p. 82.

[37] Jarvis, p. 88.

[38] Shepard, p. 71.

forced to build a larger church in 1743; Trinity Church in Newtown had to do the same in 1746.[39] In 1744, thirty-eight persons from Waterbury signed a petition to the Assembly asking parish privileges; it is estimated that they represented about 200 adherents to the church there.[40] Christ Church parish was formed in Guilford in 1743 and St. John's parish in North Guilford in 1747, the latter in the midst of a contention among Congregationalists over the question of settling a minister.[41] An Anglican church organized in North Fairfield (now Weston) in 1744.[42] St. Michael's in Litchfield dates its founding to 1745.[43] Two years later thirty conformists in Norwich proceeded to build a church for the liturgy of the Church of England.[44] In 1748, St. John's at Stratfield (Bridgeport) organized and proceeded to build a house of worship, which was the eighteenth Anglican church built in the colony. In the same year membership in the Norwalk parish rose to include 105 families.[45] And in the following year, 1749, churches were organized at Ripton, Greenwich and Middletown.[46]

[39] Hurd, p. 467.

[40] Henry B. Bronson, A History of Waterbury, Connecticut (Waterbury: Published by the Bronson Brothers, 1858), pp. 295-97.

[41] Beardsley, I, 142.

[42] Jarvis, p. 96.

[43] History of Litchfield County, Connecticut (Philadelphia: J. W. Lewis & Co., 1881), I, 133.

[44] Beardsley, I, 141.

[45] Beardsley, I, 153-54.

[46] Beardsley, I, 105-108.

The story of Anglican advance could be continued on into the next decade, but present purposes have been served. Upon the well-laid foundations of the 1720s and 1730s Anglicans effectively and rapidly built a superstructure during the 1740s, in large measure as a result of the disorders of the Great Awakening. The number of Anglican congregations and adherents multiplied rapidly during the 1740s as has been shown, and the pace continued without abatement during the 1750s. Old and established churches were constantly reporting the need for building larger sanctuaries. In 1760 Dr. Johnson said there were thirty churches of that communion in the colony, with only fourteen settled ministers. President Stiles of Yale on the same date said there were twenty-five parishes with fourteen ministers.[47] The Elizur Goodrich report of 1774 gave about one Anglican to twelve non-Anglicans in Connecticut for a total of 9,966. The highest ratio was in Fairfield County where it rose to ten in thirty-four.[48] This rate of growth greatly worried the Connecticut establishment. Stiles and his friends feared that the Connecticut churches might be swallowed up by the Anglican Church.[49]

This worry is especially well illustrated by what was happening at Yale. Before 1724 there was not a single Anglican graduate of Yale. In the first decade after Cutler's defection, one in ten of the graduates took Anglican orders in England. By 1765 Yale had graduated 400 ministers, of whom forty became Anglican clergymen. On commencement day in 1748 nine

[47] Shepard, p. 75.

[48] Shepard, p. 84.

[49] Franklin B. Dexter (ed.), Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901), I, 126, 155-58.

Anglican clergymen held a colloquy at Yale, while ten Anglicans took degrees. Among the degree candidates were Samuel Johnson's son William and Samuel Seabury.[50] Partly because of Anglican influence in the community and partly because of the rise of rationalism, President Clap established the Yale College Church in 1753 so he could better supervise the religious instruction of students. Within a few months, however, he was forced to permit Anglican students to attend services in the area.[51]

The simultaneous and rapid growth of Anglicans, separatists and Baptists in Connecticut seriously weakened the establishment at a time when ministers and magistrates were struggling to contain contentious elements within the establishment. As the separatists and Baptists drew many out of the Congregational fold in the eastern part of the colony, Anglicans attracted many Congregationalists in the west; and all three tore at the fabric of establishment in the central part of the colony. Their combined efforts contributed much to the decline of the Congregational church and thus to the rise of religious liberty. The rapid increase of Anglicanism in Connecticut is a result of the Great Awakening peculiar to that colony, and is in part an effect of the repressive control of the presbyterian type of government in the state church. But while the Awakening contributed to the strengthening of the Anglican church numerically, it also increased its spiritual vitality. Tiffany comments:

[50] Louis L. Tucker, Puritan Protagonist (Chapel Hill, N. C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1962), pp. 167-69.

[51] Tucker, p. 173.

It [the Anglican church in Connecticut] gained in warmth of feeling and depth of life by contagion. For with all its faults and attendant evils, the movement had roused the slumberous life of Puritanism as by the call of a new reformation. It made religion an experience to many to whom it had been only a tradition. It vivified the gospel as a living oracle where it had become mostly a thesaurus for theological speculation. It made very real the relations of the personal soul to the personal God . . . . The revival was a veritable quickening, and the church shared in the general benefit.[52]

[52] Tiffany, p. 142.

CHAPTER XII

THEOLOGICAL SHIFT

The ferment which produced the separate churches and the rapid increase in the Anglican and Baptist denominations presupposes at least a slight change in the theological climate of Connecticut during the middle and latter part of the eighteenth century. It should not be concluded, however, that the excitement of the times had given rise to a sudden or pronounced shift on the theological scene. Really great changes would not be obvious until the end of the eighteenth century. As in church polity so in theology the Great Awakening was divisive. It drove wedges between men basically rather close together in their beliefs, ". . . established party lines, and gave each side occasion to emphasize its peculiar views. It set pens in motion and led many to commit themselves to sentiments afterwards more elaborately defended."[1] Thus there was an ever-widening divorce that was destined ultimately to wreck the Puritan way.

Gaustad has rightly observed that four parties appeared in the theological spectrum after mid-century: the extremists, "Old Calvinists," liberals, and Strict Calvinists or New Divinity men.[2] The extremists were primarily New Lights of the separatist variety and were characterized by theological novelty or theological vacuity. A few of them had dreams and visions and tended to base their teachings on experience as well as

[1] George N. Boardman, A History of New England Theology (New York: A. D. F. Randolph Company, 1899), p. 43.

[2] Edwin S. Gaustad, The Great Awakening in New England (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1965; orig. pub., 1957), p. 128.

on Scripture, but on the whole they were firmly biblically based. Commonly the extremists simply did not have time or equipment for construction of theological treatises. Men like Elisha Paine, James Davenport and Paul Park belong in this category. It will be remembered that Park was admonished at his ordination not to work too hard constructing his sermons before going into the pulpit. In a word, he was "to open his mouth and let the Lord fill it." But one must be careful not to conclude that the extremists were theologically unoriented. In their church covenants they professed to hold to the Westminster Confession; and in the articles of belief that they constructed they sometimes used language which sounds strikingly like that of the Nicene or Chalcedonian creeds.

"Old Calvinists" were of the stripe of Calvinism in evidence before the coming of the Awakening. Though strictly conservative on the fundamental doctrines, they had gradually adapted to a situation in the churches brought on by the Half-Way Covenant. While they still believed in the redemptive grace of Christ, they had come to put an increasing emphasis on the moral life. And under the influence of Stoddardeanism many had even turned communion into a converting ordinance. They were heartily sick of the controversies brought on by the Awakening and tried to avoid theological controversy in their midst and thus to maintain a united front that would insure greater stability and power for the threatened religious establishment. An outstanding representative of this school was Ezra Stiles of Yale.

From the Old Calvinist stance of compromise there was constant defection in the direction of both a more strict type of Calvinism and an outright liberalism. Though small at first in comparison with the

prevailing Old Calvinism, these two new schools ultimately (two generations later) brought about a division of the Congregational body into two unequal groups: Orthodox and Unitarian. The development of the Unitarian or "Liberal" school was a slow process. At its background seems to be the Old Light element during the period of the Awakening. These men were turned away from the revival by opposition to itinerancy (which seemed to pass judgment on the settled ministry), exhorters, the tendency to discredit the ideal of an educated ministry, the uncharitable judging of the settled ministers and revolt against the standing order. New Light attacks against Old Lights often labeled the latter as Arminians. What New Lights had in mind in using this term of apprebrium seems to be that they objected to Old Light emphasis on the moral life as "putting one's self in the way of grace" or "preparing one's self for grace." To them the Calvinistic way would not admit such "works righteousness." Did not Scripture say, "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags"? Moreover, they opposed the Old Light lack of emphasis on the necessity for a sudden conversion experience. Although Ola Winslow's statement describes a time slightly earlier than the Awakening, it gives some indication of this brand of Arminianism:

> In 1731, New England was full of very disturbing signs of interest in the more modern plan of salvation loosely called Arminianism. In place of the familiar doctrines of God's sovereignty, His inexorable justice in the damnation of sinners, and the complete helplessness of men to do anything about it all, this new way of thinking held out hope by way of more respectable living, benevolence, and those measurable virtues generally known as "good works." These newer notions had the great advantage of being more concrete, easier to understand, and far more comfortable than the traditional sound doctrines.[3]

[3] Ola E. Winslow, Jonathan Edwards (New York: Macmillan Co., 1940), pp. 152-53.

While much of the Old Calvinism of New England was being turned away from an evangelical zeal by the excesses of the Awakening, something was happening to Puritanism in Old England. There Arminianism of the more conventional sort was making inroads, that is to say, Arminianism with its more rationalistic spirit of inquiry and its doubting of such traditional Calvinistic tenets as election and sovereign grace. This Arminianism was of a more negative type than the evangelistic Arminianism of the Wesleys. Negative Arminianism with its negative rationalism was accompanied by Arianism, which, of course, dismissed the deity of Christ and brought shipwreck to the whole doctrine of the Trinity. Arianism spread to such an extent through English Presbyterianism that by 1750 that denomination was predominantly Arian and a half century later became largely Unitarian.[4] Although English Congregationalism did not very extensively imbibe Arianism, it did not raise a very effective bulwark against it. Congregationalists of New England read widely some of this "Liberal" dissenter literature from England, notably works by Daniel Whitby and John Taylor. Especially in eastern Massachusetts was the Arian position received favorably and promulgated by such leaders as Experience Mayhew and Lemuel Briant during the latter 1740s.[5] How much Connecticut men were impressed is problematical. Apparently they resisted its attractions longer than did their confreres of Massachusetts. However, Benjamin Throop of Norwich in his election sermon before the Connecticut legislature in 1758 lamented:

While some are disputing the Personality of the Godhead, and denying

[4] Williston Walker, A History of the Congregational Churches in the United States (3d ed.; New York: The Christian Literature Co., 1898), p. 268.

[5] Walker, p. 269.

> the Lord that brought them; others are ridiculing the important Doctrine of Atonement, and casting contempt upon the efficacious Merits of a Glorious Redeemer; many are exploding the Doctrine of a free and Sovereign Grace, and exalting humane Nature under all its Depravity to a situation equal to all its Necessities; thereby perverting the Designs of the Gospel, and frustrating, as far as may be, the Means of our Salvation.[6]

New England was too small for views held in Massachusetts to be long confined to the Bay Colony. For example, Rev. Samuel Webster, pastor at Salisbury, Massachusetts, in 1757 published a tract entitled "A Winter Evening's Conversation upon the Doctrine of Original Sin" in which he denied the doctrine of original sin. In the same year it was reprinted at New Haven, Connecticut, and was answered in print by Joseph Bellamy of Bethlehem within a few months.[7]

The theological movement away from traditional New England Calvinism gradually became more pronounced but was slowed by the Revolution and events leading up to it. Walker summarizes:

> It is evident that twenty years after the Great Awakening Arminian and even Arian opinions were somewhat extensively disseminated in eastern Massachusetts, and were supported by men of ability and character. It is clear, too, that a large part of the stimulus toward such ideas came from the writings of thinkers across the Atlantic who had trod the same path from Calvinism to Liberal Theology somewhat earlier. But it is no less manifest that the development of some of the Puritan churches in America, especially some of those that most opposed the revival movement, had been leading them independently to results similar to those reached by the Presbyterian Puritans in England. That the development of Liberal Theology, in its outward manifestations, was not more rapid after 1765, and that Unitarianism did not become a recognized power till the beginning of the nineteenth century, was due in a measure to the early deaths of Mayhew and Briant, but even more to the great political

[6] Gaustad, p. 126.

[7] Walker, pp. 273-74.

> struggle which absorbed the thought of New England for more than twenty years.[8]

It must not be concluded, however, that either Old Calvinism or the liberal development that evolved out of it were a result of the Great Awakening. The former existed before the Awakening and was attacked by it; the latter no doubt would have come anyway as it did in England. But as noted above, the revival contributed to the drawing of party lines and cut off the faction what was disposed to a more rationalistic approach from those who were more biblically oriented and thus contributed to the greater liberalism of the former. Wright observes:

> The effect of the revival was not so much to spread Arminianism as to prepare the way for its rapid growth. Down to the Awakening, a sense of community in New England still existed. For all Stoddard's differences with the Mathers, he still came to Boston every year at Harvard Commencement time. He could argue with the Mathers, because all felt they had a stake in a common enterprise. But after 1745, New England was so divided that there was a sense of community among the liberals and a sense of community among the evangelicals, but any wider sense of common purpose was wearing very thin. Communication between the two groups increasingly took the form of debate, rather than the search for agreement; and the gap between the two widened rapidly. The opposers of 1745 were Arminians by 1755.[9]

The extravagances in belief and behavior during the Awakening thrust many orthodox leaders into strongly anti-Calvinistic positions. For instance, Charles Chauncy of Boston who was still conservative at the time his Seasonable Thoughts was written against the revival in 1743 had abandoned the doctrine of original sin by 1758.[10] He had no idea that a stand against the Great Awakening would lead him down the path of Arminianism.

[8] Walker, p. 279.

[9] Conrad Wright, The Beginnings of Unitarianism in America (Boston: Starr King Press, 1955), pp. 57-8.

[10] Gaustad, p. 127.

In 1743 he asserted that "the principal Opposers are among those of an establish'd Reputation for their Orthodoxy" and concluded it to be "base slander" to spread the tale that any ministers in the country were Pelagians.[11] But soon there were to be many Pelagians among the anti-revivalists.

Although neither the Old Calvinist nor the liberal schools were a result of the Great Awakening, the party of Strict Calvinists which produced the "New Divinity" was. Gaustad describes it as the "monument of the Awakening" and says ". . . that apart from the Awakening there would have ever been a powerful, vigorous Edwardean party is highly improbable."[12] Just as there was nothing basically new about the Old Calvinist viewpoint, so there was nothing basically new about the Strict Congregational or Strict Calvinistic viewpoint. The latter harked back to the early days of Puritanism when there was a strong emphasis on the necessity of a conversion experience and a relation of the same as a requirement for church membership and when there was a thorough acceptance of the doctrines of election, original sin and other Calvinistic tenets. For friends of the Awakening, the movement was a vindication of the ancient way. For opponents of the Awakening, the movement with all of its excesses tended to discredit the ancient way. Out of the Awakening there arose, then, a militant, evangelistic Calvinistic school and a tendency to equate Calvinism and the New Divinity.

[11] Charles Chauncy, Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion (Boston: Rogers and Fowle, 1743), pp. 398-99.

[12] Gaustad, p. 134.

The leaders of the New Divinity movement were eight in number, seven of them of Connecticut blood and all except one trained at Yale. All were sympathetic with the New Light position. The group included Jonathan Edwards and his two young associates, Joseph Bellamy and Samuel Hopkins; and five representatives from the next generation, Stephen West, John Smalley, Jonathan Edwards the younger, Nathanael Emmons and Timothy Dwight. It is certainly beyond the purview of this study to discuss the last five men, and a detailed treatment of the theology of the first three would be quite out of line at this point. Only a discussion of those elements of their theology that represent new trends is presented.

Partly because death interrupted his labors, Edwards' system was not fully worked out on all points nor made in all respects logically consistent by the revivalist of Northampton. Yet he stands historically as the founder of a school with certain definite tendencies and influence on New England theology and life. His desire both to defend Calvinism and to modify it in the direction of more clearly teaching the responsibility of man opened the door to significant changes in New England theology. There is always a danger in apologetic theology because, as Burggraaff observes, the apologete commonly hopes not only to confound the enemy and to win him over to his conclusions, but also tries to turn the enemy into a friend. "The result is that the apologetic theology becomes conciliatory, and at one point or another it is willing to surrender some disputed ground, in order that it may gain strength at some other point."[13] It was this approach

[13] Winfield Burggraaff, The Rise and Development of Liberal Theology in America (New York: The Board of Publication and Bible-School Work of the Reformed Church in America, 1928), p. 111.

that led more than anything else to the modification of Calvinism in the hands of members of the New England school. The result was that ultimately descendants of Edwards and the Arminian-Unitarian element found themselves marching under the same banner of liberalism. "History has not justified Edwards' modification of Calvinism," according to Burggraaff.[14]

The Calvinistic doctrine of the Sovereignty of God taught that that sovereignty was absolute and that the grace of God was irresistible. Calvinism also taught human responsibility. Arminians, on the other hand, insisted that an individual could help or hinder the work of his salvation and that he was therefore responsible for his salvation. How was Edwards to resolve the dilemma within Calvinism and Calvinism's contention with its theological opponent? The problem was attacked in his treatise on the Freedom of the Will.[15] Edwards' solution was to make a distinction between "natural ability" and "moral ability." He held that man has natural ability in that he has power to strike or not to strike someone, to show his neighbor kindness or not to show him kindness, or to put or not to put a cup of intoxicating liquor to his lips.[16] Since man is under no physical compulsion to do or avoid doing these things, he may be said to be free. Since he is free he is also responsible. Burggraaff interprets Edwards: "This natural power or ability is very real, and hence, since he can, he

[14] Burggraaff, p. 112.

[15] For an analysis see Frank H. Foster, A Genetic History of New England Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1907), pp. 62-81; and Alexander Allen, Jonathan Edwards (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1896), pp. 281-301.

[16] S. E. Dwight (ed.), The Works of President Edwards (New York: G. & C. & H. Carvill, 1830), II, 37.

owes to the Creator a full obedience. Sin is not a physical want, not a want in the nature or power of the will, but an ethical want, a lack of love. Yet man is unable to change that ethical want; he cannot make himself love God,--this was his moral inability."[17] So man had natural power but not moral power to do right. In a word, Edwards taught that "Moral inability consists in the opposition or want of inclination."[18] However slightly, the Calvinistic door of total depravity and total inability of man to accomplish his salvation was set ajar. The door would eventually swing wide open to admit freedom of the will. Burggraaff also finds other evidence of diversion from Calvinistic doctrine in Edwards. Although the great mentor taught the substitutionary death of Christ, he was somewhat indefinite and left the way open for the substitutionary repentance viewpoint. A full-fledged acceptance of the substitutionary repentance view taught that Christ on the cross merely repented for the sins of man instead of actually paying the penalty for the sins of man, as Calvinism had taught.

Second, Burggraaff discovered that in his more rational approach to theology, Edwards shifted the emphasis from the sovereignty of God to God as the moral governor of the universe and rooted the conception of God's forgiveness deep in His universal benevolence, "rather than in the totality of God's being, which includes his justice as well." (This would take from the hands of the Arminians the weapon of accusation that Calvinists had a terrible deity.) And Burggraaff finds a tendency in Edwards to

[17] Burggraaff, p. 117.

[18] Edwards, Works, II, 163.

leave opportunity for basing one's religious convictions on the subjective influences of an inner light rather than on the objective standard of Scripture.[19] Perhaps the latter point is overdrawn. In reading Edwards one gets the impression that he sticks rather closely to the Calvinistic doctrine of the Testimonium Spiritus Sancti (testimony of the Holy Spirit within the believer), according to which the Holy Spirit worked through the Scripture. Yet Heick unequivocally states, ". . . Edwards was close to Zwingli when he stressed the Reformed conception that the divine light is given immediately and that the word of God is not the proper cause of this effect."[20] It should be remembered, however, that Edwards was no wild-eyed enthusiast. He opposed the excesses of the Awakening and even took Whitefield to task for too much emphasis on emotion.

Joseph Bellamy was the elder of Edwards' two immediate associates. A native of Cheshire, Connecticut, he graduated from Yale in 1735 and from 1738 until his death in 1790 pastored the rural Congregational church in Bethlehem, Connecticut. He was a gifted preacher and a warm friend of the revival, itinerating for some two years on its behalf. Though he might have had several of the more prominent pulpits of his day, he elected to remain in northwestern Connecticut, where his home became a virtual theological seminary; about sixty ministerial candidates received part of their training there. It was through this means that Bellamy disseminated the Edwardean views, which he subscribed to almost wholly. The major divergence from Edwards in Bellamy's teachings was his assertion that Christ

[19] Burggraaff, pp. 116, 120-21.

[20] Otto Heick and J. L. Neve, A History of Christian Thought (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), II, 416.

died for all mankind, as opposed to the standard Calvinistic view that Christ died only for the elect.[21] Heick's summary on Bellamy is useful:

> He agreed with Edwards that man has the ability to repent, and that every minister is under solemn obligation to call his hearers to repentance. God is not a capricious being, but a being of infinite benevolence. The eternal decrees rest in the love of God. The origin of sin is limited to divine permission.[22]

Emphasis on ability to repent rather than on human depravity and emphasis on the love of God rather than on His justice were not common in Puritan theology.

With Samuel Hopkins came a greater divergence from Edwards' teachings. Born in Waterbury, Connecticut, and graduating from Yale in 1741, Hopkins went to study with Edwards at Northampton shortly thereafter and from 1743 to 1769 pastored the church at what is now Great Barrington, Massachusetts. Thus he was a near neighbor of Edwards during the years that the latter was at Stockbridge. In 1770 he moved to the pastorate of a church in Rhode Island, where he served until his death in 1803.

The theological views of Hopkins were largely extensions of the theories of Edwards. He tried to maintain a true freedom of the will and taught that man had natural freedom and that he should therefore be exhorted to repent. At the same time he spoke of the government of God and held that the directing power of God overrules all his choices. Building on the speculations of Edwards on virtue and the human will, Hopkins came to some very different conclusions on choice and the question of original sin. Walker summarizes:

[21] Walker, p. 287.

[22] Heick, II, 419-20.

> All moral qualities, according to Hopkins, inhere in the choices or "exercises" of the will. Back of these exercises is a state or bias of the "heart" which in itself has no moral quality . . . . This doctrine that sin and virtue consist in exercises or definite acts led Hopkins to deny the responsibility for Adam's sin which Edwards had maintained. Men "are not guilty of his sin, are not punished, and do not suffer for that, any further than they implicitly or expressly approve of his transgression by sinning as he did." Yet God has so constituted man that present sin is an effect of Adam's sin; man sins as soon as childhood begins to act. The divine efficiency is the ultimate cause of all acts, good and bad; but since sin is in the act or exercise and not in its cause, sin belongs to man and not to God.[23]

Beginning with Hopkins, the imputation of Adam's sin was discarded from New England theology.[24] Hopkins' student, Nathanael Emmons, developed Hopkins' vies further and these were in turn modified and developed by Nathaniel W. Taylor. Thus the distinction made by Edwards in his Freedom of the Will led finally to a Pelagian view of the will. Charles G. Finney, the great evangelist and president of Oberlin, was a follower of Taylor and strongly Arminian in his theology. Burggraaff concludes:

> That was the course which was run by the New England Theology discussion of the freedom of the will. From the distinction of Edwards between natural and moral ability, it travelled on until with Finney man is declared to be completely free. Sin is a free act; conversion is a free act. Pelagianism was one of the legitimate offsprings of the Edwardean theology.[25]

The Great Awakening was destined to change profoundly and irrevocably the theological stance of Puritan New England. The Enlightenment with its rationalistic and Deistic influences was able to make deeper inroads in New England because of divisive effects of the Awakening. Opponents of

[23] Walker, p. 290.

[24] Heick, II, 420.

[25] Burggraaff, p. 119.

the Awakening tended increasingly to cut themselves off from evangelical influences, allowing the new rationalism to have greater sway in their midst. Friends of the Awakening within the establishment followed very largely the lead of Edwards and the New Divinity men. Modification of the Calvinism within that camp led ultimately to a Pelagianism and liberalism as devastating to the old Puritanism as that of the Enlightenment. So by the early years of the nineteenth century, heirs of the old Calvinism and the New Divinity were able to march side by side under the banner of liberalism. Unitarianism had cut deep inroads into the Puritan heritage. But not all Congregationalists followed the lead either of the Deists or the New Divinity men. And Separate Baptists would effectively stand with their denomination for a while longer in a Trinitarian and evangelical revivalistic program.

CONCLUSION

In the words of Gaustad, "The Awakening was 'Great' because it was general: none escaped its influence or avoided its controversy."[1] Not only was it general in New England as a whole, but it was also general within the narrower confines of Connecticut. No one, regardless of class or geographical location was immune from its impact. Therefore it cannot be interpreted as an urban, a rural or a class phenomenon.

Preeminently the movement was religious in nature; men sought a conversion experience, assurance of forgiveness of sin and a daily life in which they felt the blessing and presence of God. The Awakening came in part as a protest against the departure of eighteenth century Congregationalism from its earlier ideals, in part because of the preparation made by revivals in the Middle Colonies and by the Edwardean revivals in New England, in part because of the preaching of such evangelists as Whitefield and other itinerants, in part because of social disorganization and the rise of the individualistic spirit.

Hardly had the Awakening begun when its divisive effects started to appear. As Goen observes: "The Great Awakening in New England brought not peace but a sword. Although genuine revival came to many churches throughout a wide region, there were numerous places where revivalism became an uncontrollable ferment, dismaying even its friends by the resultant 'errors in doctrine' and 'disorders in practice.'"[2] "New Lights" insisted

[1] Edwin S. Gaustad, The Great Awakening in New England (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1965; orig. pub., 1957), p. 42.

[2] C. C. Goen, Revivalism and Separatism in New England, 1740-1800 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), p. vii.

on the necessity of a conversion experience and generally took a more emotional stance than the "Old Lights," who emphasized an intellectual type of religion and opposed "enthusiasm." Radical New Lights were opposed by both the Old Lights and the moderate New Lights for their criticism of the established clergy, their extreme emotionalism, and their separatistic tendencies. Divisions existed within the Connecticut churches before the Awakening, but the revival movement with all its attendant furor widened the rifts. Heimert may be noted in point:

> What the Awakening did was crystallize these differences, giving them objective form, and more importantly, expand them beyond the clergy, making partisans of the laity as well. The "two armies, separated, and drawn up in battle array" which Jonathan Edwards espied in 1742 were not clerical factions merely but hosts whose confrontation embodied a fundamental cleavage within the colonial populace itself.[3]

The effects of the Great Awakening were widespread indeed. If the movement was fundamentally a call to spiritual renewal, it may be well to start with a statement about the spiritual quickening that the revival brought. Judging from the church records, conversions probably exceeded ten per cent of the population of the colony and perhaps were as high as twenty per cent in a few communities. A new missionary concern was reflected in efforts to evangelize the Indians on the part of Brainerd, Wheelock, Davenport and others. Social improvement occurred in many places if one may accept the testimony of contemporary writers, although inaccessibility of town court records does not make it possible to see how much of a difference the revival may have made in the crime rate of individual communities.

[3] Alan Heimert, Religion and the American Mind (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 2.

A second major effect of the Awakening was the fracturing of the establishment. Radical New Lights pulled out of the established churches to form Separate churches because the parent body did not insist on a conversion experience as a requisite to membership, because its pastor was judged to be unconverted or because its pastor was not emotional enough in his preaching to suit them. While the toleration laws of Connecticut recognized Anglicans, Baptists and Quakers, they did not recognize Separate Congregationalists. So the separatists were subjected to various forms of harrassment and forced to pay taxes to the established church in addition to supporting their own fellowships by free will offerings. Persecution engendered a movement for religious liberty that brought a loosening of controls late in the eighteenth century but not complete religious liberty until well into the nineteenth century.

The confusion wrought by the Awakening also contributed to the rise of new denominations. While the Baptist view of baptism attracted many of the separatists to that denomination, perhaps just as many were drawn to their ranks because the Baptists had won toleration and therefore could qualify for exemption from ecclesiastical taxes for the established church. Many of the more conservative sort who were affronted by the furor of the Awakening moved over into the Anglican church. Thus the ranks of the established church were greatly depleted by the excitement of the time, and it could no longer control Connecticut society as it had before the Great Awakening.

Another important effect of the Awakening was a shift in theological

emphasis. The Old Lights, cut off from evangelical influences, gradually drifted off into Unitarianism under the rationalistic impact of the Enlightenment. The New Lights under the influence of Jonathan Edwards developed a new theological school that ultimately rejected many of the basic tenets of Calvinism and led to a theological liberalism not markedly different from that to which the Old Light viewpoint led.

Ola Winslow provides an excellent summary of the effects of the Great Awakening:

> In the religious life of America, the year 1740 marks an end and a beginning. Current notions of religious experience underwent a swift, determining change. The relation of the church to the community, the minister to his flock, one congregation to another—in fact, the whole structure of community life—was sharply and permanently altered. The Great Awakening was an upheaval. It destroyed much that was good, encouraged lamentable excesses, and ushered in an era of bitterness and calumny unparalleled in American religious history.
>
> . . . . This revival, or rather series of revivals, vitalized afresh the religious experiences of the average man, and gave to the doctrines and forms of the church an intensely new personal meaning. It poured new life and energy into that which had grown stale and shrivelled. Its very destructiveness testified to the exuberance of the new life principle. According to men's capacities, their minds were stirred and their old thought patterns broken up so that they were forced to reshape the loyalties by which they lived. Somewhat too suddenly also, it gave them a startling new sense of their own power in group action. For these and many other reasons, the Great Awakening, in spite of all its extravagances and tragic mistakes, was the most potent, constructive force in American life during the mid-century.[4]

For good or ill Connecticut was destined never to be the same after the Great Awakening. Revitalization of much of the religious life of the colony had occurred. Accompanying that had risen a new emphasis on

[4] Ola E. Winslow, Jonathan Edwards (New York: Macmillan Co., 1940), p. 175.

individualism (brought on by preaching that focused on the individual's relationship to God) that contested with the older emphasis on the corporate aspects of church and society. Religious pluralism was accentuated with the increase in churches of the Baptist and Anglican persuasions. And many were turned away from the religion of the heart by the excesses of the Awakening to the religion of the head that was more compatible with the new spirit of the Enlightenment.

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First Congregational Church, Brooklyn, 1731-1913

First Congregational Church, Canterbury, 1711-1844

Cheshire Congregational Church, 1724-1917

First Congregational Church, Colchester, 1732-1937

Second Congregational Church, Colchester, 1729-1876

Columbia Congregational Church, 1722-1917

First Congregational Church, Cromwell, 1715-1875

First Congregational Church, East Haddam, 1702-1927

First Congregational Church, East Hartford, 1699-1913

First Congregational Church, East Lyme, 1719-1914

First Congregational Church, East Windsor, 1695-1932

Centerbrook Society and Congregational Church, Essex, 1722-1931

First Congregational Church, Fairfield, 1694-1806

First Congregational Church, Farmington, 1652-1938

Franklin Congregational Church (Norwich Second), 1718-1932

First Church of Christ (Congregational), Glastonbury, 1731-1924

First Congregational Church, Granby (N. W. Society of Simsbury), 1739-1919

First Congregational Church, Griswold, 1720-1887

St. Mark's Church (Protestant Episcopal), Groton, 1738-1920

First Congregational Church and Ecclesiastical Society, Guilford, 1717-1921

Second Congregational Church at North Guilford, 1720-1859

Christ Church (Protestant Episcopal), Guilford, 1744-1909

Hampton Congregational Church, 1723-1897

First Congregational Church, Hartford, 1684-1930

Kent Congregational Church, 1739-1915

South Congregational Church, Breakneck Hill, Killingly, 1746-1755

Killingworth Congregational Church, 1735-1893

First Ecclesiastical Society and Congregational Church, Lebanon, 1700-1883

Goshen Congregational Church, Lebanon, 1728-1888

Newent Congregational Church, Lisbon, 1723-1932

Hadlyme Ecclesiastical Society and Congregational Church, Lyme, 1742-1932

First Congregational Church, Madison, 1707-1917

First Congregational Church, Mansfield, 1710-1788

Storrs Congregational Church, Mansfield, 1737-1928

First Congregational Church, Meriden, 1729-1937

First Congregational Church, Middletown, 1668-1871

First Congregational Church, Milford, 1639-1926

Montville Congregational Church (New London North Parish), 1721-1909

New Canaan Congregational Church, 1733-1899

New Fairfield Congregational Church, 1742-1900

New Hartford Congregational Church, 1739-1853

First Congregational Church, New Haven, 1639-1937

White Haven Congregational Church, New Haven, 1742-1942

Newington Church of Christ (Congregational), 1716-1927

First Congregational Church, New London, 1670-1888

St. James' Church (Protestant Episcopal), New London, 1725-1874

New Milford Congregational Church, 1712-1805, 1808-1859

Newtown Congregational Church, 1715-1946

North Haven Congregational Church, 1716-1910

North Stonington Congregational Church, 1720-1887

Separate Church (Strict Congregational), North Stonington, 1746-1822

St. Paul's Church (Protestant Episcopal), Norwalk, 1741-1925

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First Congregational Church, Old Lyme, 1731-1874

First Congregational Church, Old Saybrook, 1736-1935

Plymouth Congregational Church, 1739-1897

St. Matthews Episcopal Church, Plymouth, 1744-1829

Portland Congregational Church, 1710-1925

First Congregational Church, Preston, 1698-1917

First Congregational Church (North Killingly), Putnam, 1715-1904

Redding Congregational Church, 1729-1882

Scotland Church of Chirst (Congregational), 1732-1915

Brunswick Separate Church, Scotland, 1746-1846

Huntington Congregational Church, Shelton, 1717-1917

Somers Congregational Church, 1727-1774

Southbury Congregational Church, 1732-1922

First Congregational Church, Southington, 1728-1876

First Congregational Church, South Windsor, 1694-1898

First Congregational Church, Stonington, 1674-1925

Christ Church (Protestant Episcopal), Stratford, 1722-1932

First Congregational Church, Suffield, 1710-1836

Thompson Congregational Church (North Killingly), 1728-1856

Voluntown and Sterling Congregational Church, 1723-1902

First Congregational Church, Westbrook, 1724-1838

West Hartford Congregational Church, 1713-1924

First Congregational Church, West Haven, 1724-1916

First Congregational Church, Wethersfield, 1694-1835

First Congregational Church, Windham, 1700-1924

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